VIDEO GAMES YOU WILL NEVER PLAY

A FULL-COLOR BOOK ABOUT CANCELLED GAMES BY THE UNSEEN64 COLLECTIVE

UNSEEN64

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Before you read this book

Every single day of the year, hundreds – maybe even thousands – of videogames are released worldwide in traditional shops and online digital distribution for consoles, computers, smartphones and tablets. There are more games available than you will ever be able to play, but at least you can choose a few of them to enjoy as you please. What if we told you that there are games you will never get to play, even if you wanted to?

Taking in consideration AAA and indie projects, released games are probably only 10% (or less!) of those that were in development or pitched. The remaining 90% are in fact cancelled, lost and forgotten. This is a great loss in gaming history, but we can still do something. Maybe we will never get to play these unreleased videogames, but at least we can preserve their memory and keep dreaming about what they could have been. Unseen64 is an online archive with articles, screenshots and videos to remember the cancelled, beta and unseen videogames. Every change and cut creates a different gaming experience: we would like to save some memories from lost videogames for curiosity, historic and artistic preservation. We would like this book to be a physical recollection of some of the most interesting games that we'll never get to play and a way to raise awareness about all the playful memories that videogame history could lose forever.

Before continuing to read this book, please keep in mind that:

- The lost games featured in this book are just a small sample of all the titles we will never play. It would be impossible to list them all in just one book.
- We are a collective of gamers from all around the world.
- Most articles in this book are written by Italians and people from other non-English countries. Each article was proofread by English native speakers, but there could still be typos and random engrish.
- Most of us are not professional journalists, but we are extremely passionate about this topic and have put a lot of effort and energy into this book.
- Many lost games were planned for multiple consoles and computers. On our online archive, they are organized in multiple categories. This is just a static book and we decided to organize these games by console as it seems to be the best way to try to give them some sort of order.
- Cancelled games are a deep, complex topic to explore. It's not easy to recover information and memories about them. For many of these lost games, especially the oldest ones for 8 & 16 bit consoles, there is not much info available: only a few words can be said about them. This shows how ephemeral games can be and how easy it is to lose every single detail about a project that was once in development.
- There are many different contributors and sources for the information used by authors published in this book: a few of them wanted to remain anonymous considering the sensitive information provided.
- We had to use watermarked screenshots when there were no better ones available. Unfortunately original screenshots from lost games are also missing.
- Createspace's print-on-demand service we used to publish this book has a 480-pages limit, so we had to use small font size, small margins, remove spaces between paragraphs and to cut a lot of images and content originally planned, to fit as much as possible in here. Yeah, it's kinda ironic that we had to cut stuff from a book about canned games.
- We wrote this book in our free-time.
- We don't have much free-time.
- We did the best we can with our limited free-time.
- This book was made with love and sleep deprivation.

We hope you enjoy this book... thank you for your support!

Copyright, Fair Use and Good Faith

The images reproduced in this book are printed under the banner of Fair Use as supplemental visuals to support critical and historical writing. All images contained herein are copyright of their respective rights holder. This book is not affiliated with any video game developers or publishers in any official capacity.

Unseen64 is an independent, nonprofit archive for unfinished games that were never released, lost in a limbo that could erase many important pieces of gaming history. While there are many books about released videogames and their culture, there are not enough volumes dedicated to all the other games that were lost and risk to be forgotten forever.

We are a collective of gamers from all around the world, and many authors and editors have contributed to realize this book. We have read, checked and reviewed all articles before adding them to this volume, but we are not omniscient: there could still be some errors and misunderstanding in the info gathered to create this book of things that could have been.

We have to assume that those who wrote these articles did proper, legitimate, correct and complete researches, to find out as much as possible to remember these unfinished projects, with sincere and honest intentions. Therefore all articles are published in Good Faith (as the latins said “bona fides”) and fair use: if you find any errors or issues regarding some of the content we preserved in this volume, please let us know by emailing us at info@unseen64.net

Gaming Philology is the study of games and their history. It includes elements of gaming criticism, trying to reconstruct developers’ original concepts and to preserve some memories of lost games based on interviews, contributions from game creators, historical archives, beta versions, prototypes and early media released.

Frank Gasking

(Founder of Games That Weren't)

The preservation of unreleased video games could be thought of as a thankless task - but luckily we don't see it quite like that. Why such an obsession for things that are unreleased? I'd say its the curiosity inside of us, but also simply because we love games and appreciate the work that goes into producing them. Often though, so much blood and sweat goes into a title, for it to never get experienced or appreciated by the public as intended - which is something that as preservationists we aim to rectify.

Luca has asked me to partly share my experiences with the Games That Weren't project, which has been an 18 year or so journey for me. Occasionally we cover other platforms, but primarily we are dedicated to the Commodore 64 and Amiga (with full digital archives). Preservation is involved work – it means scanning through countless magazines, websites, tracking down developers, doing interviews, establishing friendships, working with contributors and then having to preserve data from deteriorating and obsolete physical media. It's difficult, as often some developers do not wish to speak about their past, or don't see the value in preserving it - but luckily it is rare, and more often than not there is a willingness to make things available. Our biggest challenge (and shared with others no doubt) has been to beat the gradual degrading of disk and tape media, and preserve what we can before it is too late. Our task gets harder as the years pass - where we have been lucky with findings like Daffy Duck, we have tragically missed out with others like Parasol Stars. But, we preserve what we can – and we will keep on doing so until our dying days... all because we love what we do!

We're a small cog in the world of unreleased game preservation, working alongside many other projects such as Unseen64, Lost Levels, Atari Protos, Snes Central and more. The importance of having projects like these is vitally important, as it means more ground covered and potential for more games to be saved from complete oblivion. If it wasn't for all of these projects, then so much could be lost forever.

Unseen64, in particular, is simply stunning. What the team covers on almost a daily basis is staggering, with information across multiple platforms from the early 16-bits, to present day platforms. Very often I learn about games from platforms I never owned, or had never heard about – but also often prototypes of released games, showing major differences from the final retail version (which is another side that I find fascinating). It is thanks to them that so much gaming heritage has been preserved and documented for our future generations. Overall it makes perfect sense to bring all of this hard work together with a printed publication, which can properly celebrate the work achieved over the years by the team. Much of what you will be about to read is due to what these guys have spent hours researching and documenting, all for free and via their passion for all things game related. It's been an honour to contribute a foreword to celebrate their work, and I raise a large glass to Unseen64 and the wonderful work that they do!

Online: www.gamesthatwerent.com

Heidi Kemps

(Freelance games / anime writer, founder of gaming.moe)

I've been attending E3s and game industry trade shows for about sixteen years now. I can remember one of the first E3s I went to, where I was amazed to see a bunch of new Tiny Toon Adventures games being made. Tiny Toons! My favorite cartoon growing up! And these games were being made by TREASURE, of all people! What a match made in heaven - a property near and dear to my heart, and a developer who had made so many brilliant games. I played all of the TTA games, I talked to the staff of the publisher (Conspiracy Entertainment) expressing my enthusiasm, I went on my forums and my fansite and expressed my utter delight.

Unfortunately, the great Tiny Toons game revival was anything but. The Gameboy Advance title, Scary Dreams, barely got a North American release (I actually got a European copy years before anyone knew the US version existed), and the much-hyped PS2 game, Defenders of the Universe - which would have reunited the show's entire voice cast for the first time in ages - was cancelled in an advanced state of completion. The world, it seems, was not deserving of more Tiny Toons, and for many years, I wondered if that sliver of gameplay I had experienced at E3 years ago would be all I would ever play of that game. Thankfully, somebody out there with near-complete code realized how important Defenders of the Universe was to some of us. The game is now floating around on the internet, complete save for a few lingering text issues.

Since then, I've gone to every trade show wondering which of the games I wind up playing will be cancelled (or, at least, heavily retooled) before their release. There have been several, some of which I've written about for this book (Psy-Phi, Dangerous Party). Sometimes, as in the case of Defenders of the Universe, preview builds or near-complete review code leaks out so we can get some hands-on with things that never were. Other times, all we have to go on are screenshots, descriptions, and vague memories that fade further and further as gaming events start to blur together in the minds of those who attended. (I had to dig up a lot of my old notes about Dangerous Party to jog my memory - I'd even forgotten the game's name, remembering only "hey, what was that weird as hell Hudson party game I played several E3s ago?")

For every game that makes it to market, there are many that never reached that point. Some were killed in the conceptual stage - pitches that couldn't find a buyer, or were unsuitable for the current market or hardware specs. Some got a good way into development before plugs were pulled. A few very nearly made it to market before some manner of disaster struck - legal issues, problems with company finances, and sometimes people just looking at the finished product and saying "Wow, uh, this really didn't turn out to be very good at all, did it?"

Even if these unreleased games never came to full fruition, there is an inherent value in the ideas and images they present. There's stuff that's wild and experimental to the point of being totally non-viable commercially - and, conversely, there are game ideas that were scrapped when a seemingly safe market suddenly imploded. There are games that were victims of developer and/or corporate hubris, testaments to internal conflicts and hideous mismanagement that killed many a skilled development team. Still others simply found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time - Propeller Arena was famously all set to launch before the tragedy of 9/11 happened. So many of these cancelled games come with fascinating stories of their own to tell - many of which are harsh lessons about game development that modern teams could stand to learn from.

Every game in here has a story behind it. Sometimes the story ends happily, like with Defenders of the Universe. But most of the time, all we have are pictures, recollections, and occasionally tales from the trenches of the developers themselves. It's up to us to discover and assemble those stories, learning what we can from them. I'm happy to contribute to keeping these unreleased games - good, bad, and ugly, - in our collective memories.

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Joe Martin

(Games Journalist & Narrative Designer)

Two Thank Yous and An Apology

I can still remember the first time I read anything on Unseen64. I was a Staff Writer for Custom PC Magazine at the time and, while researching for an article about Half-Life 2, I stumbled through an Internet rabbit-hole that ended in Unseen's article on the game.

I can't remember everything that was in that article, if I'm being honest. It was a fantastic hodge-podge of concept art and story details that had been mish-mashed together from various sources into a somewhat disjointed timeline. It took me a long, long time to digest it all.

But I can remember how exciting it was. That article was a treasure trove of information about one of the best games ever made and I drank it up as fast as I could, pasting key quotes and links into my article notes as I went. I kept those notes for a long time after my own article was finished, using it as the inspiration for many interviews in the months that followed and returning to Unseen64 at least three times a week to broaden my knowledge of other games too.

Fast forward six or seven years though and here I am writing this and passing on my own research for Unseen to use in it's articles. The story has apparently gone full-circle.

So, that's my first Thank You - to the fantastic community of contributors who have kept me and many others informed, invigorated and inspired over the years. Many of the articles I've written wouldn't have been half as good or a quarter as fun to work on if not for Unseen64.

Yet, while the data gathered by Unseen64 and others is impressive, I have to be honest and say it isn't enough. Not for me. Once you've realised this data exists then your eyes are opened and you can't play a game ever again without wondering what it could have been or what was cut away. I can't even read a game announcement now without thinking of the 10 other games that got cancelled before that!

So, Unseen64 is a great community and it's accomplishments are incredible... but there's still more work to do. There always is.

Over the last few years I've tried to do my bit. I've written about cancelled games and abandoned pitches for sites such as Eurogamer and RockPaperShotgun and I've lectured about why other journalists should get involved too. In fact, the personal highlight of my decade-long career in journalism was working with Warren Spector to unearth original design documents for the Deus Ex series - something you can read more about later.

Of course, I could do more as well - and that's where the apology comes in. I feel very strongly that not only is this work important but that there's a great urgency to do it now, rather than later. The sort of content that makes up this book cannot survive in a vacuum; memories fade and even digitally stored data will eventually expire.

I'm sorry because I know that if I don't capture everything I can now then there may not be an opportunity to do it later.

This work isn't just important to me, either - it's important to all of us. Whatever your views on whether games are art or merely entertainment, I'm sure all of us would like to see more, better games in the future. We want to play great games and we want others to share our passion for them with others. The work done by Unseen64 and others is vital to that because it shows us how games are made in a way we don't usually get to see - and that in turn guides the games of tomorrow.

To put it another way: if those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it, then Unseen64 helps us avoid going round in circles.

That's why the second and most sincere Thank You is for you. By picking up this book you're helping to keep Unseen64 alive and you're inspiring the team. The work they do will inspire others like me, who'll then contribute their own work - and so the cycle continues.

To put it bluntly: by picking up this book you're helping to make gaming better. That means the world to me and I can't thank you enough for it - though I would remind you that you can always do more too...

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John "Sketcz" Szczepaniak

(Gaming historian, author of The Untold History of Japanese Game Developers trilogy)

I've researched and documented the history of games for over 12 years, and in that time my passion has always been for the obscure, niche, esoteric, forgotten, overlooked, and unobtainable. Some have argued this pursuit of the rare is pretentious or elitist, but in actual fact it stems from a fear of loss and the denial of something potentially wondrous. As a child I had been heartbroken learning of the destruction of the ancient Library of Alexandria, and a desire to provide permanence in an intrinsically impermanent world has always been on my mind. Of course nothing is as impermanent as that which never officially existed - whatever stage of pre-retail completion it reached, an unreleased game is the scarcest of games. Hence, this book on the unreleased, by Unseen64, is a joy to behold and one of the most significant books of the century. Apart from being denied a unique experience, of being denied the limitless potential which is promised within something incomplete, an unreleased game also represents a tragic loss of years. If four friends work for over two years on a scrapped project, that is a decade's worth of creativity thrown away. If a team of 12 work for just over four years, that's half a century gone like tears in the rain. The material will be lost, their stories untold. When I interviewed over 80 developers in Japan for my own books, I made sure to ask all of them: "Do you know anything about any unreleased games at all? Your printed words could be the only historical record if aliens invade and destroy us all." A topic as important as unreleased games requires such a blanket question because, ultimately, how does one research a topic where nothing is yet known - where you might not even be aware that there is an unreleased game? Unsurprisingly I discovered numerous games which no one even knew did not exist, and therefore no one would know to ask about or investigate. For example some of the staff that formed Game Arts at one time worked in a room provided by Taito, developing games which Taito paid for but never used. Until I asked my blanket question above, perhaps only five people on Earth knew of this secret Taito deal circa 1983. This is why this book is so valuable. If the world can see the passion of Unseen64, then maybe developers will voluntarily come forth to share experiences. Look at the list of over 200 games in the index - multiply it by at least four (x4) and you still won't encompass all the unreleased games waiting to be known. Many in the index I wasn't even aware of. In my experience, every developer has at least two examples to recount. I'm looking over this list and several I have chased myself. My investigation of Akira still continues - a week before writing this foreword I received a phone call from Stewart Bell, claiming he not only worked on the Game Boy version, but that he had copies of the boxed retail release. Hell, I even gave Unseen64 my notes on Andrew Whittaker and his unreleased Power Crystal for the unreleased M2, including phone number to his remote island home. We all need to work together to document these games before it's too late. For a rare game with low print run, you only need to find one garage, with one big box of games, which has one working copy to examine. There might be a few hundred garages with that specific oddity. But an unreleased game isn't as widespread. When a game is cancelled it is deemed not for your eyes; it is to be buried and hidden and kept from view, like a taboo act, a carnal treasure, or sacred offering to the Old Gods; it is the mysterious "Rated 18" symbol which stirs the inner child in all of us; it is the warning of Pandora's Box which says do not open, but which stirs a fire in us to breach that seal! Someone, somewhere, made the decision that none of us could experience this, and that is why the desire is so deliciously intense. Our only sources of knowledge are from the people who made it, who won't be around forever, ancient magazines scans, or remnants of dev material. But everything works against unreleased games - the light-sensitive EEPROMs, burned CD-Rs, or magnetic floppies are in a constant state of biodegrading. In my 12 years of games research, interviewing over a hundred developers altogether, good archiving methods have always been the exception rather than the rule. In fact, if it wasn't for over-zealous collectors who dive in and rummage through the garbage of others (literally), a lot of prototypes of unreleased games would never have been saved. I love the pursuit of undocumented knowledge, I love the Unseen64 staff for researching all this, and I sincerely love this book you're holding right now - I only hope that you share my desire to stop Alexandria burning and help preserve our cultural heritage.

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Kurt Kalata

(Editor-in-Chief, Hardcore Gaming 101)

Before the internet, the history of video gaming was in a murky place. The corporate culture surrounding them ensured that publishers only let the audience see what they wanted them to see, and communication between gamers was largely relegated to whatever whispers passed around the classroom. It didn't help that, through the 80s and 90s, much of the devoted audience consisted of children, who were often too involved with passing their own tests rather than recording current events. The only historical record we had were video game magazines.

Amidst the reviews and codes and previews, there were always games that were revealed but never actually released. They might've appeared as blurry screenshots, taken at a Japanese game convention or swiped from Famitsu, or as a quick mention in a rumor column, or even featured in advertisements. Back then, game releases were rarely tracked and not everyone lived by fully stocked retail stores - it could easily be assumed a game was released but just never hit the shelves by your area.

These titles slowly entered the realm of urban legend. Games like Bio Force Ape and Mother gained extraordinary notoriety over the years, thanks to being featured in a magazine with such a large distribution as Nintendo Power, but tons and tons of others were seen maybe once or twice and never heard from again, only recalled in hazy memories. "That game with the sword dude? Dando or something? What ever happened with that?"

As the internet grew and connected the world, old questions were answered and new ones were asked. Prototype cartridges of long-missing games were found at garage sales and arcade boards were discovered in forgotten warehouses. We learned of a whole generation of Japanese arcade games that were cancelled, due to failing location tests thanks to the Street Fighter II boom. The Japanese media, typically impenetrable to outsiders, often even has little mention of many of these games, with the only sources being half-remembered blog posts by gamers who happened to be in the right place at the right time.

And all of that is why Unseen64, and the contents of this book, are so important. The uncovering and preserving of these titles is the closest that the video game industry has to archaeology, and it's done almost entirely by enthusiasts - most game publishers are famously lax about the data retention practices and often have to seek out fans to reclaim their own work. There's also something romantic about it - each unreleased game has a tragic story behind it, giving a sense of endearment to even the most lackluster titles. And it's a historical record of things that never were, of games that might've been released had the fortunes of the developer (or the publisher) gone a different way. It's thanks to this website and its writers, along with the emulation authors and game preservationists, that have helped shaped this important but often overlooked area of video game culture.

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"Guru Larry" Bundy Jr

(Game Journalist and Historian)

Video games, as a whole, have always been a great source of entertainment for us, (well, most of them anyway).
But what always has been alluring to myself and many others is the process of how they're made... We all know what's approved, as we can play that. But what about the parts that aren't and are thrown by the wayside? Those pieces that can't be put in because of time constraints and inevitably are placed in the sequel, those games where all the reviews said it would have been better if it had multiplayer, and did have until some genius removed it, and ultimately, those games that are scrapped entirely.
Every single deleted piece is confronted with a "Why?" and uncovering that Why often leads to fascinating, tragic, or sometimes even downright hilarious stories.
So, thanks to Unseen64 and many other neurotic denizens of the internet, we finally have answers to a lot of those "whys".
Well... that, or I've just been babbling a load of pretentious bollocks for the past few paragraphs in a desperate attempt to look smart and they were deleted just because they were crap :D
So sit back, pour yourself a refreshing glass of the finest vintage Mountain Dew and enjoy flicking through an Italian's meticulous, obsessively researched chronicle of gaming history, and discover games you'll sadly never get to play, Games you never even knew existed and games that'll leave you scratching your noggin' wondering: "What were they thinking?"

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Daan Koopman

(Gaming blogger for Nintendo World Report | GoNintendo | NF Magazine | N1ntendo)

The thirst for information is becoming more and more in our lives. You want to know what the latest happenings are in the world of video games. You visit website after website, video after video and scrap the barrel for every little detail. In most cases, this ends in the release of a game that you couldn't wait to play. Now and again though, the stream of information just ends. Some projects just get cut short before seeing ever the light of day. Their unsung stories deserve to be told, equally to the games that make it to market. The constant struggle for survival in this industry takes its toll on even the best of developers. It is why Unseen64 is more important than you might think.
Their focus is not on the current, but on the forgotten. The scrapes left behind by time. The scrapes you have likely forgotten about. I remember well the first time that we really seen Super Mario Sunshine. It had a completely different look to it with huge legged enemies and the scene bursting with people. I always wondered what happened with that vision. Another Nintendo example are stories inside NST (Nintendo Software Technology). The changes within that company are strange from the outside, but Unseen64 made sense of it all. For me, it is a refreshing database that I love to dive into time and time again. This book will represent some of it, but I implore to spent a free day and go through every single piece in their archives.

Online: youtube.com/NintenDaan1 | @NintenDaan

Shane Gill

(Owner / Operator of DidYouKnowGaming)

Roughly four years ago I hastily made a handful of images showcasing what I believed to be obscure but appealing video game trivia. Despite the images being poorly researched and showcasing my talent for making typos, they proved to be shareable and found their way to an audience far larger than I expected. The attention to my newly established blog, and what seemed to be a never ending stream of new faces, was jarring and exciting. Though I was taken back by the exposure, I knew a good thing when I saw it and took the only action that made any sense at the time: create more content. I ran short of tidbits that I could recall from memory, and even faster than expected. If I wanted things to continue, I had to look elsewhere and learn the ropes of researching. One of the earliest and most impressive resources I found in my search was a website called Unseen64.

Even as a rookie researcher, the importance of the site's archives and preservation efforts were not lost on me. Within its records I found mock screenshots of Final Fantasy VII before it became a 3D title, Banjo-Kazooie in its infancy as Project Dream, and a cancelled 3D Sonic game I'd never seen before. I had a wealth of new material for my site and YouTube channel, but Unseen64 provided me with something even more valuable. It opened my eyes to the kinds of content that could exist online, and gave me insight to how proper research should be conducted. I'm sometimes fortunate enough to interview game developers about their work, and when I undoubtedly run out of meaningful things to ask them, I think back to those archives to help guide my questioning.

Discoveries from Unseen64 and the community of preservationists associated with it have helped me grow an audience of over two million subscribers on YouTube. When I saw that Unseen64 was producing its own quality editorial videos, I considered how I could repay the site and its supporters for all they've done for me through the years. After reaching out to one of the site's contributors, Liam Robertson, we discussed bringing some unseen content to the DidYouKnowGaming channel and its two million followers. It was wonderful to see Liam's videos get a positive reception and the attention they deserved -- and they even introduced my channel to a new crowd of gamers. One important fact I've learnt from seeing my blog grow is that the actions of individuals do make a difference. I would implore anyone reading this lovingly crafted book to introduce a friend to Unseen64 and its archives. It has the potential to reshape an individual's way of thinking, or at the very least, show them how captivating cancelled games can be.

Online: www.didyouknowgaming.com | youtube.com/user/DYKGaming | @_ShaneGill_

Unseen Covers 1

To find the covers needed for this book we asked to our readers to propose their artworks and we received some great ones! Unfortunately only 2 covers were used as the final ones - but in a book about unseen games, we cannot leave out all the unused covers: in these "unseen covers" galleries you can admire all the "lost" Unseen64 book covers, with each author's details, email and link to their online portfolio, to enjoy everyone's effort and talent. Thanks a lot to every artist who has contributed!

Artist: Abbott Kelly
Email: Batuner2@yahoo.com

Artist: Anomaly Effect | Email: anomalyeffect@tuta.io
Online: anomalyeffect.wordpress.com | twitter.com/anomalyeffect

Artist: Brandon Criterna
Email: mogy_other@hotmail.com
Online: twitter.com/mogy64

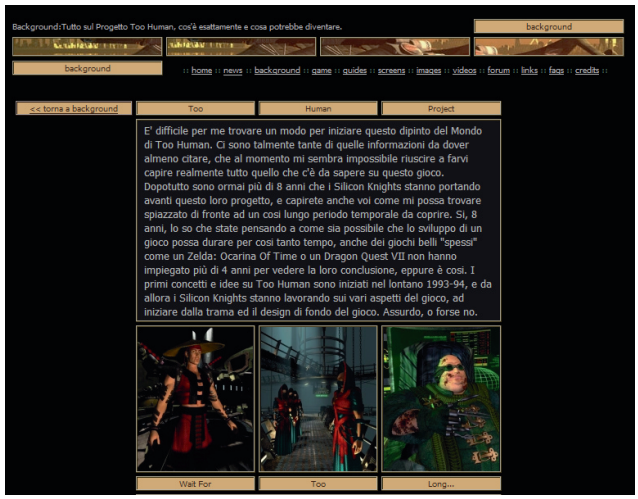
Pizza, Nerds and Lost Video Games: The History of Unseen64

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

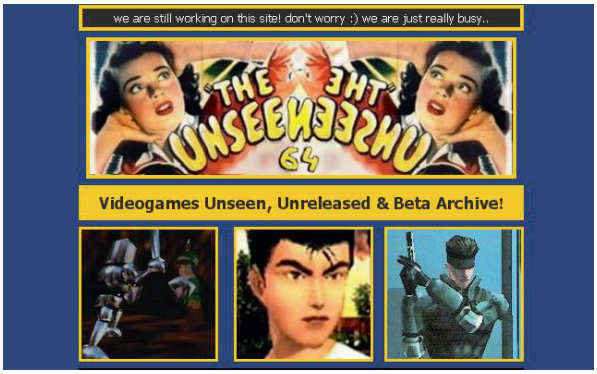
It all started in Italy in late '90s: me and a few of my Italian friends noticed that many of our favourite Nintendo 64 games were nothing like the old screenshots that were published in magazines before their release (different graphics, deleted areas and characters, etc.). In the mid '90s, internet was starting to become easily available with cheap connections in Italy, and once I

got online around 1998, I hunted down more and more screenshots of those cancelled and beta N64 games, published on ugly Geocities websites. I wanted to save all those images to find even more differences and to dream about how those lost games could have turned out. One game in particular had my attention - Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It was meant to be released for the Nintendo 64 Disc Drive, but after many delays, when it came out for the standard N64, most of its original features and places were removed. I searched through the web to find more and more early Zelda 64 screens from official websites and fansites. In one of those fansites, there was a nice section named "Unseen Zelda" focused on the beta content from Ocarina of Time. It was cool to know that there were more people interested in the changes made to Zelda 64. In a couple of years I had already amassed a big collection of screens and videos for beta and cancelled Nintendo 64 games, but it was mostly a chaotic directory in my PC. In mid 2000, with the help of my friend Rosalex (Alessandro Rosa), we created a fansite for Perfect Dark, inspired by our love for its multiplayer mode. In that Perfect Dark website, I wanted to open a small section to organise all those screens with beta and cancelled N64 games, to share them with other nerds. Taking inspiration from that interesting "Unseen Zelda" page, I named the section "Unseen64", as

it had many more Nintendo 64 games than just Ocarina of Time. It was late 2000 / early 2001 and the Unseen64 page in our Perfect Dark fansite (backup on Web Archive: goo.gl/DpnXRD) can be considered the first version of Unseen64. Gradually, I began finding out that there were even more geeks interested in beta and cancelled games, such as the wonderful Assembler Games Forum (assemblergames.com) filled with collectors of prototypes. Another great



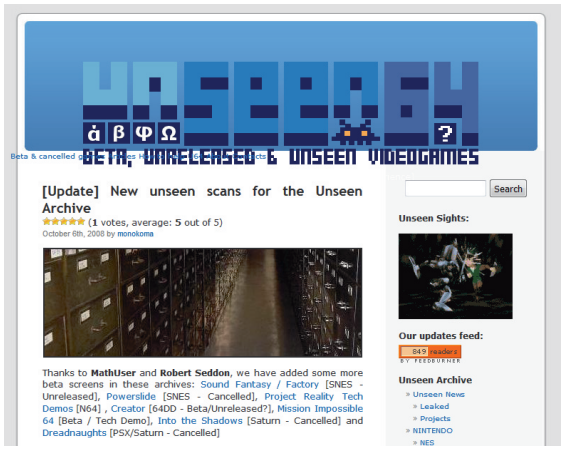
"unseen gaming" website from the old days was "The Strange (and Rare) Videogame Pics Page" (backup on Web Archive: goo.gl/M6FW9X) made by another Italian guy, with lots of photos from obscure and unreleased consoles.
In February 2001, I became addicted with Phantasy Star Online on the Dreamcast, and looking back at the early videos and screenshots from the game, I came to the realisation that there were many elements that were changed or removed from the final version of PSO. Along with my blog / fansite dedicated to PSO, there was a page full of screenshots and concept art for the removed content, titled "PSO Unseen" (backup on Web Archive: goo.gl/ENSvor). Another game that took my interest at the time was "Virtua Fighter RPG" aka "Project Berkley", that was later released as Shenmue, but they cut most of its originally planned 16 chapters. In the same years, it was announced that Eternal Darkness (developed by Silicon Knights) would be cancelled for the Nintendo 64 and released for the new Nintendo GameCube. Even Too Human, a Silicon Knights project that began as a Playstation 1 game in 1993, was then planned to be released in 2003 / 2004 for the new Nintendo console. I was fascinated by Too Human: a game upon which development was still not finished after an entire decade. In that respect, Too Human is a real unseen gem: the final version was released in 2008 for the Xbox 360 (15 years after it was conceived), but the original concept was heavily changed and cut. At the end of 2001, I created a new fansite dedicated to the Too Human Project (backup on Web Archive: goo.gl/ClCZMw), with a gallery and details for the cancelled Playstation version. In 2002, my collection of beta screenshots had many directories with N64, Dreamcast and Playstation "unseen" games, but I was too lazy to frequently update the "Unseen64" section in the abandoned Perfect Dark fansite. In November 2002, Eternal Darkness for Gamecube was finally released in Italy. After finishing the game, I created yet another website, "Eternal Unseen" (backup on Web Archive: goo.gl/2ANuwn), dedicated to the cancelled N64 version and the removed content from the Gamecube version.
In 2003, we officially stopped working on the Perfect Dark fansite, but we still had some visitors just for the Unseen64 page. Meanwhile, I organised a new minisite dedicated to the development of Zelda 64 (which can now be seen at www.unseen64.net/2008/04/16/zelda64-project-development/) because there was too much confusion surrounding the soon-to-be-released Zelda: Master Quest on the GameCube. Master Quest was viewed by many as Zelda URA, which was meant to be released for the Nintendo 64DD, but in reality, it was just a tiny part of the original 64DD expansion. Later, I found many other websites and communities about lost games, such as Frank Cifaldi's Lost Levels (www.lostlevels.org) and X-Cult (www.x-cult.org). It was nice to see so many gamers who shared my same interest and love for games that we'll never play. It had become possible to talk with more and more people interested in finding and sharing documents



about unseen games. Still, there wasn't a comprehensive archive to preserve all of my beta screens, videos and information in a single place. By the end of 2003, I had an "Unseen64" section on a dead Perfect Dark website, a "PSO Unseen" page, a site dedicated to the "unseen Too Human Project", another site for "Eternal Darkness Unseen", an article about the "unseen development of Zelda 64", and many gigabytes of screenshots and videos of beta and cancelled games for various consoles saved in my PC. It became clear that it was time to organize all that mess into a single website. That is when the current "Unseen64" was born; initially as an ugly series of pages made in HTML with Office Front-Page. Even if the site harboured other consoles that were irrelevant to the "64" in the title, I decided to keep the original name "Unseen64" because me and my friends had grown attached to it. For each game to be archived in the site, I had to manually create a single page offline, insert all the images one by one, save everything and upload the files online. A few descriptions and articles were written in Italian by me and my friend Yota (Alberto Li Vigni). We worked on Unseen64 intermittently through 2004 and 2005, but as our free hosting was limited, we were not able to upload and archive videos. However in 2006, I finally opened a Youtube Channel (youtube.com/user/monokoma) to share my collection of videos for beta and cancelled games. In late 2006, the third member of the main Unseen64 Staff finally joined our team: Blek (Damiano Bacci) was another Italian nerd that loved to read about unseen games and he offered to help with the site. Somehow, thanks to YouTube, Unseen64 became even more popular among gaming geeks, and in 2007, we received various emails from people that wanted to incorporate our little archive in their bigger websites. We were scared to lose our "freedom" so usually we replied with a "No, but thanks!". We were having a lot of fun updating Unseen64 and the feedback from readers was great. We also organized a Podcast (in Italian) to talk about the strange world of beta and cancelled games! During that time, another Italian gamer named Reno (Mathieu Renaudat) joined the staff to help with scanning old magazines and to participate in our podcast. There were quite a few fans of the Italian Unseen64 Podcast, and it was nice to know that people were interested in listening to a bunch of nerds talking about games we'll never play.

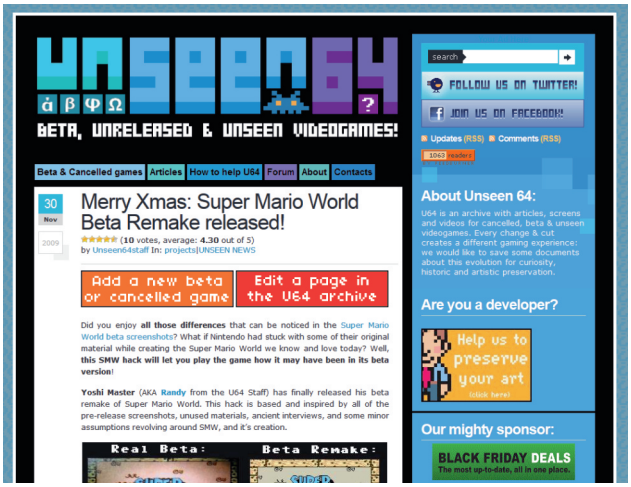
In October 2007, I got into contact with Mai, a guy from the Netherlands that offered to host Unseen64 on his server and pay for a real domain name (we were still using free web hosting with a crappy subdomain), as well as leave us the freedom to organize the site as we please (in exchange he just wanted to add some Google Adsense banners). I chatted with Mai for some time, and he seemed reliable and crazy enough to start a good collaboration between Italy and the Netherlands. We worked together to upgrade the old HTML website into a better Wordpress-powered archive and translated most of the main articles into English (the site was mostly in Italian until that point). Finally in April 2008, the "new Unseen64" was online! Thanks to WordPress, it was faster and easier to write articles, so we were able to have daily-updates to preserve even more unseen games. During that time, we opened a dedicated Unseen64 forum and many people from all over the world joined us. With their help, the community started to grow more and more. Some new users even offered to help write more articles for the site! In mid 2008, Tamaki (Liam Robertson) also joined the Unseen64 Staff to create video articles for

some of the more interesting lost games we wrote about in the archive. A few more people offered to create videos for Unseen64 and different ones were made: my idea was to let everyone to freely create Unseen64 videos, a collective name to use by who would like to talk about unseen games. As I was not able to record videos in English, it would have been nice to see other english gamers making them. It was great to receive more help and we were super happy to finally be able to expand Unseen64 with an international staff. Edge Magazine even made Unseen64 their "website of the month" in December 2008!



Unfortunately, with the American and European financial crisis in 2008 / 2009, many software houses closed down and there were even more cancelled games to preserve in the Unseen64 archive. We had a lot of beta and unreleased games for old consoles still to be added to the site, so it was not easy to keep up with daily updates. Even with a few people helping with articles, most work was still done only by me, taking a lot of my free time away. Developers even started to directly contact us to send info, images and videos from lost games they worked on. It was like opening pandora's box: for each unseen game archived, dozens more were found. That was a lot of work! In mid-2008, I started a full time job, and time to organize, research and write for Unseen64 diminished even more. If that wasn't enough, many contributors that initially wanted to help with writing for the site or creating videos vanished after only a few articles. That was not good! How could we archive all of those new unseen videogames if we had no free time and there were no new people to help us?

In 2009, we struggled to update the site as much as we could. Articles were written in English by me and Yota, but as we are Italian, the quality was not very good. Still, even with a site full of Engrish descriptions, people were happy to see such an archive of unseen games and visitors kept coming. Another Italian gamer known as Celine became a huge supporter of the site, sending us lots of info, scans and images of cancelled games. In February 2009, Mai opened an Unseen64 Twitter account to share the news we posted on the main site. While we did not care much for Twitter during its early days, it later became our main channel to find and share news on unseen videogames and often it's the only way to get in contact with developers that can help us to preserve more lost titles. In May 2009, we had a graphic redesign for the website to make it look better and easier to navigate. I had to switch to weekly updates instead of daily news, as I really did not have the time to do more. My backlog of games to add to the archive started to grow and even today I still have many contributions from 2009 and early 2010 that need to be added to the site! I am hopeful that one day we'll be able to add them all. Even with all the difficulties to manage such an infinite archive of unseen games, feedback from readers and other

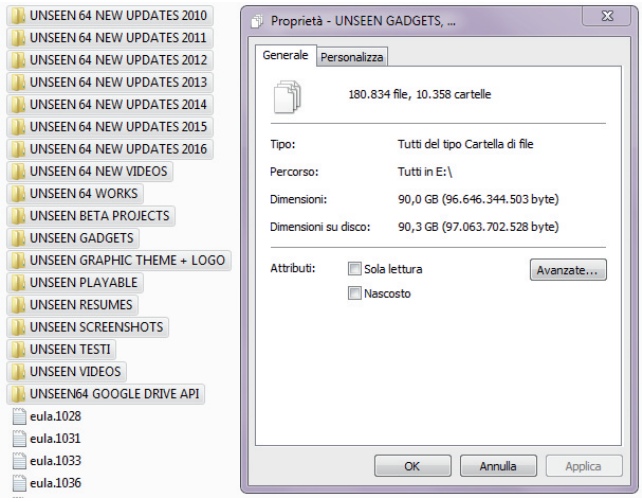


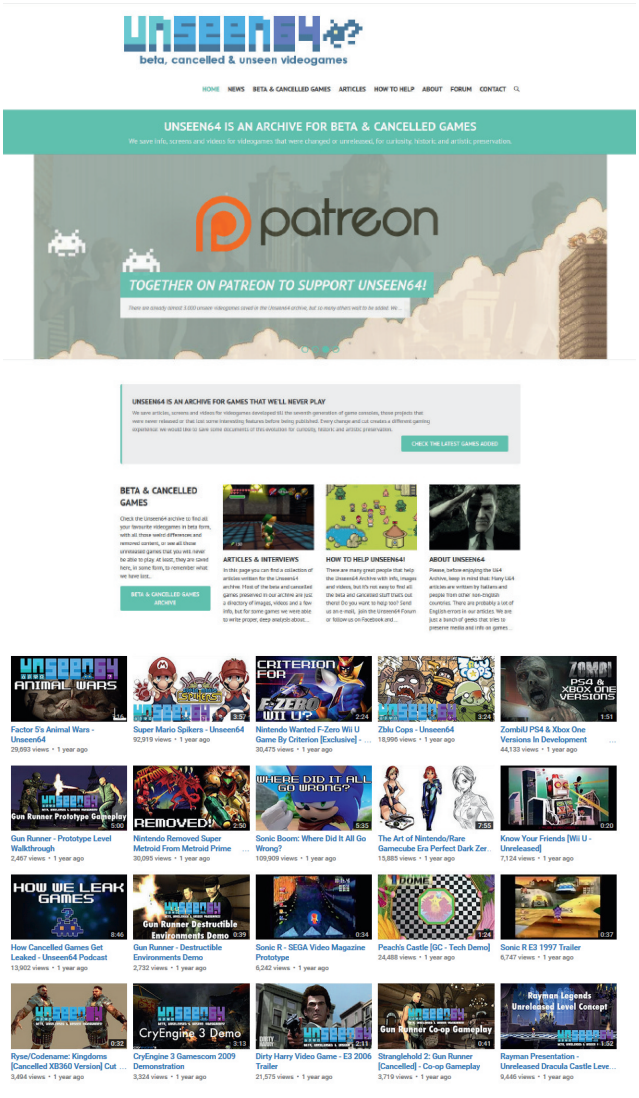
bigger gaming websites was getting better and better! We were super happy with all the positive comments and the interest from all around the world, and it made us proud to organize such a historical archive. It was hard, but we loved it.

In late 2010, we added a plugin to Unseen64 to make it more like a Wiki, allowing visitors to edit articles and add new ones, but it was a major failure: we received lots of spam, terribly written descriptions and copy / pasted articles from other websites. Only a few of the user-generated articles were good enough to keep without any editing. That system did not help to save time, as I still had to review each article before publishing it online. After a couple of years, we had to remove the Wiki system and return to a staff-based website, adding new contributions as soon as possible (meaning weeks or months before seeing them on the site).

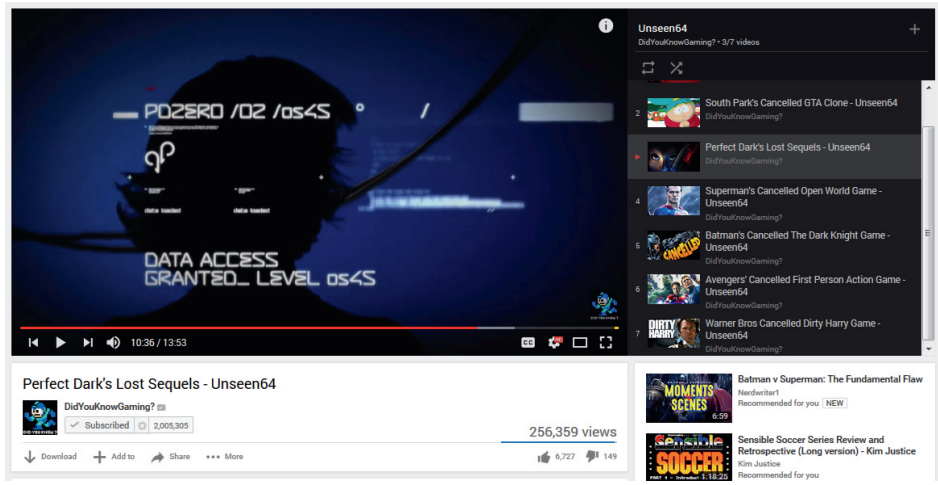
In late 2012, there was another huge blow for Unseen64 when Google decided to ban us from using Adsense Banners in our site: we were writing about ROMs of prototypes and MODs for old 16 bit games (such as the Super Mario World Beta Remake). Even if we did not have a direct download of the ROMs on our website, Google cut us off from our only resource of money to pay for the server. It was really sad. We tried to explain our reasons to Google, but without luck. Mai had to find new ways to pay for the server and added some ugly / spammy banners to the site. We did not like them (at all), but we did not have any other option at the time. Mai also had to remove the old Unseen64 Forum because it used too many server resources and it was difficult for him to pay to keep the database online without any issues. Even if we used a lot of energy and effort to keep the site updated and to archive lost games during the Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii generation, in 2013 we decided that Unseen64 would not cover new games for the 8th

generation of consoles (WiiU, 3DS, PS4, Xbox One, PSVita) as we did not have enough free time for them. The current situation of the videogame industry is much more complex than what we tried to follow in early 2000: there are games for consoles, there are games for handhelds, there are games for PCs, there are games for smartphones and there are hundreds of new indie-games announced every day. It's impossible to keep up with so many interesting video games that could be cancelled or that could be released with changes from their early versions. We already struggled to cover all the most interesting beta and cancelled games for the "retro" consoles, that it made no sense to try to archive something else. That's still the current state of the Unseen64 website: as an archive for unseen games up to the 7th generation of consoles. Maybe in the future we could gather enough resources to quit some of our day-jobs and write more for Unseen64, finally being able to cover "new" games too: we'd love to do it for sure. Problems for the site were not finishing yet. From the end of 2013 till the first half of 2014, Unseen64 remained offline because of a serious tech problem that Mai was not able to fix. That was a nightmare: all the work we put into Unseen64 became useless and we were not able to add more games to the archive, making our (already huge) backlog even longer. Hundreds and hundreds of unseen games to be added to Unseen64, and no way to do it. I started to lose faith in the project, and with Mai we were thinking of selling the site to someone else and get on with our lives. In just a few years, Unseen64 became a project too big for a small group of Italians with no free time. When everything seemed lost, in July 2014, Mai was able to get the site back online, but he told me that he wanted to leave the team so that he could concentrate on his job and life. He offered to keep Unseen64 on one of his servers and to help with the technical problems, but





only as external support to be paid, even if heavily discounted. I had to find a way to pay for the server, to add all the remaining lost games in the archive and to reply to hundreds of messages from fans and contributors. It was overwhelming: I had to decide if keeping up with Unseen64 was worth it, or if closing it down was for the best. There were lots of readers that counted on Unseen64 to have a proper online archive of games that would never be, and there were even many developers that trusted us enough to share info and media from lost games they worked on. I still used part of my free time to research closed gaming studios and cancelled videogames, as it became one of my major interests. Unseen64 deserved another chance. I gave Unseen64 a year to get back on track and to find a way to sustain itself with fan donations. Me and Yota once again started to write weekly articles. We found a better graphic template for the site and Tamaki was back with a new series of video articles to promote Unseen64 on Youtube. In November 2014, we opened our Patreon page to gather donations from readers and it was a success: even if we didn't raise as much as the more popular websites, we were still able to reach our first goal in just a few months. The Unseen64 server was paid for a couple of years! We are super happy: seeing this kind of support from our readers makes us proud to continue working on Unseen64, even if it's still not easy to keep up with life and all the effort needed for the site. Big gaming networks like IGN, Gamespot and Kotaku have the power and money to pay a team to work full-time on their websites, to publish daily updates and create detailed video insights. We don't have their resources, but we have something better: we have you, a community of gamers that know why it's important to archive beta and cancelled games. Together we can keep making Unseen64 a better online museum for all those lost games that could be forgotten. Donations from Patreon go up and down (as people can remove their support at any time), but even if we did not reach the goal of 250$ a month to write a book about cancelled games... we started to work on it anyway! In early 2015, I organized the book content, and with Yota and Blek we began to update articles and plan interviews with developers. We would have never been able to do an entire book by ourself, so we asked for help from the Unseen64 community and many people answered the call by volunteering to create and proofread articles. A few of them, like LazyFace (Sam Batten), also joined the main Unseen64 staff to contribute to the website too. It took almost 2 years to write this book in our spare time, we put a lot of love and energy into this project and we hope that people enjoy it and help raise awareness for the importance of remembering unreleased games that could be forgotten.



In November 2015, one of the biggest gaming channels on Youtube offered to host Unseen64 videos made by Tamaki, helping us reach a wider public audience: thanks to Shane Gill, Did You Know Gaming became one of our major supporters, and thanks to their huge number of followers more and more people are now able to learn about games that will never be. In the last few years, Youtube became the primal source of insight for gamers. Detailed video-articles can spread the memories of cancelled games wide and far, giving seemingly forgotten games a new chance at being remembered. As the main Unseen64 Staff is Italian, it's not easy to create Unseen64 videos beyond what Tamaki can do at the moment (it would not be possible to do English voice-overs for Yota, Blek and I) and with most of our free time already taken by work for the site and the book, we still did not expand on Youtube as much as we would like to do. However, we have a few ideas to test in the future. For some reason, people are more likely to support and donate for video content than for traditional text articles, and if that is the best way to secure a steady support for Unseen64, then we'll do it as best we can.

This is where we are now: as of early 2016, Unseen64 is mostly a website about cancelled videogames, as we found it harder to archive beta differences for games we didn't play. User-driven Wikis such as The Cutting Room Floor are much better at detailing what changed in released games, and we can focus on what we do best: researching lost videogames. With cancelled games, we just need to know that they were never released, and they are good to be investigated and archived. We love to seek more info on unreleased projects and it's great to create reliable relationships with developers and collectors to preserve as many details as possible.

2016 is the 15th anniversary of Unseen64 and we would like this book to be a celebration of all the time, effort, energy and love we dedicated to the preservation of games that will never be. What will happen to Unseen64 in the next 15 years? We'll find out together, with you and all of our patrons.

Thanks for your support!

Anonymous sources and research

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

This is a delicate topic in investigative journalism, but it's something that could be overlooked when talking about researching video games. While it's quite clear to the Unseen64 staff and to most of our main contributors that sometimes sources have to be left anonymous to be able to receive info, screenshots, videos, or even playable builds of cancelled games, there is still a minor number of people that never thought much about the importance of privacy in our field. This may be partially due to the conception that if some information lacks a public source then it is must be false, which as you can imagine is far from accurate. Guaranteeing the anonymity of sources is one of the most important ways to ensure the preservation of a few lost games that would have not been saved in any other way.

Say there's a former developer that worked on an ill-fated project who wished to share some info, screens, or videos with us. Due to the potential for trouble from the studio for sharing this knowledge, the developer would like to remain anonymous in exchange for the information. Though this may seem like a rare occurrence, it happens more than you would think. Often major companies make their employees sign a non-disclosure agreements (NDA), which allows the company to prosecute an employee who reveals insider information on projects without approval. After all, videogames (especially AAA projects) are a product made to be sold in an economic market with thousands of competitors, forcing companies to protect their property however they can. Even old lost games could be seen as current intellectual property to protect if the company believes that certain elements could be resurrected in future projects. Other times there are no legal NDA's involved, but people that worked on the project still may prefer to remain anonymous, just to be safe. There are times in which everyone is fine with sharing info and media from cancelled games for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it's because the project is so old that no one cares anymore, sometimes it's because the original studio that owned the IP is long gone, other times it's because it was just a small game from an unknown team, and rarely it's because the company is simply open about their unreleased projects.

Naturally, it takes time to earn enough trust to ensure someone that what they share will remain anonymous. Most developers would not give sensitive documents to random kids on the "internetz." By starting our archive work in early 2001, Unseen64 was able to build up a long history of trusty relationships with developers. In 15 years we talked with many people that worked on videogames and almost all of them understood the importance of preserving memories from their unseen projects. Initially it was a leap of faith, as we were still a mostly unknown website lead by Italian nerds, but people eventually started to recognize what we did and helped us archive more and more lost games. By not revealing who shared some of the most sensitive details with us, developers learned that we were able to keep the anonymity we promised.

Sometimes we also receive documents from anonymous emails that lack any indication of who sent it. The important thing is that we receive those details, screens, and videos from games that could have remained lost. In these cases, we just have to do some parallel researches to confirm the credibility of the info and then archive it in the best way possible. When someone feels that it's important or interesting to save some memories on games that will never be, for whatever reason they have, then it's just a matter of them getting in contact with us. We should also not forget about all the times in which we directly contact developers, asking them about some of the cancelled games they worked on, while trying to explain our archiving process and the potential for anonymity if needed. If they reply (which they hopefully will), any information is only a few questions away.

While it could be more difficult for traditional investigative journalism to decide whether to use info from anonymous sources, for video games it's almost more practical. Why would someone spend their free time to build an intricate story about a lost video game, make fake screenshots or even fake videos? There are no important economic or political reasons to do something like this, if not just for the "LULZ." And even then, the effort is not worth the payout. But of course, this has occurred a few times here at Unseen64, though it was not much of a problem: half of the time it's blatantly clear that it's just a joke, while the other half of the time it's just a matter of waiting for real developers that worked in the presumed title to comment on the fake info. If the

latter will never happen, then we'll just have archived another curious vaporware that never really existed and will never be, like a lot of projects announced for the Panasonic M2 or the Game.com. It's unfortunate, but it's extremely difficult to fact-check false information on a cancelled game that lacks any serious information in the first place.

We also should briefly talk about what's often referred to as "off-the-record" information, or in journalism terms information that is shared "unofficially, in confidence, not for publication". Yep, we also receive this kind of info, and we must refrain from publishing it. But how could something that cannot be shared help to remember lost videogames? Well, there are different cases. For example, we could be provided with the private email of someone that could share more info, they could send us some details useful to uncover related facts, or explain why it's important that we would never reveal something we found, or they could lend a playable prototype in order to help write an in-depth article but cannot be leaked because of serious legal issues.

These things happen more often than you would expect, and it's even more important that all of this remains private so we can continue to preserve the lost games of the past. As it happened in the past that some external collaborators did not follow the correct research guidelines, respecting developers and their work, I try to keep the Unseen64 staff as small as possible, with half of it made by old time real life friends. Even then, the articles and their respective sources are reviewed and analyzed before publishing it on the site, just to be sure that everything was acquired in the right way.

Preserving lost games is not just about finding info and putting it online; it's about knowing when and how it's best to make something public, to be able to research even deeper, to protect sources, to earn even more trust, and most importantly, to save games that would not be preserved in any other way. So, is it worth it to ensure anonymity to save the memory of lost videogames? For the Unseen64 staff and myself, absolutely. There are countless of examples in which the trust we've obtained by keeping anonymity of sources has helped us gain more insight and info on cancelled games, effectively allowing us to preserve them throughout time. Sure, they may have been information that we were forced to keep private, but we were still able to archive much more than what was previously available. If we continue to keep building a long history of trust and anonymity, we can only imagine that this will be even more true in the future.

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Gaming philology: text criticism and video game researches

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

What is philology? And most importantly, what's the textual criticism branch of philology, and how is it relevant to the history of unreleased video-games? To answer the first two questions in a few words: philology is the study of language in written historical sources, and textual criticism is an attempt to reconstruct an author's original text based on early variant copies of manuscripts. But how do we answer the third question? Well, trying to analyze, criticize and understand gaming history based on its incomplete and canceled games is very similar to trying to analyze, criticize and understand a text - such as a novel - based on its early manuscripts. We're not using what was completed and published and consumed by hundreds of people - we're using obscure sources, memories on games which were never officially released or played by their intended audiences. We're using bits and pieces of these lost games to try to understand the context in which they were made, the people that were involved in their development, and the history of the gaming companies and publishers. Yes, much can be discovered by studying complete games, classics such as Super Mario World, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time or Metal Gear Solid. We can learn about the state of the industry and the market at the time, the revolutionary methods used to develop such amazing titles, the way plots and characters were written, and how programming kept changing over time. But the same can be said about canceled games, and the different accounts regarding the development of said titles. According to philology, when comparing different "witnesses" of a single original text (or in this case, game), the observed differences are called "variant readings", or simply "variants" or "readings". In our book, these "readings" are the different reports, articles and interviews regarding canceled games. All this gives a certain richness and unpredictability to research. Because primary sources are rare (unless the canceled game was eventually released or leaked in some form or another, but these cases are in the minority), all we have are secondary ones, and because they are written or told by people with different perspectives and roles in game development, they tend to give different viewpoints regarding the project.

For example, we can learn something very specific from the programmer, but then learn some obscure detail from the character designer; both help to paint the bigger picture. We can have a particular viewpoint regarding the cancellation of the game from a representative of the publisher or an ex-employee, and we can have a counter-argument from the game director (meaning, the person who possibly got in a fight with the publisher). The fact that we have all these different perspectives means we can get richer, more interesting material, but it also means our piecing together of gaming history can get a little difficult. Besides, the interesting thing about all these unseen games is that some of their stories are incomplete - there are games of which we know quite a bit, while there are others of which we know next to nothing. Why were they canceled? Who was to blame? When did development start, who was the director, the designers and for which console was the game supposed to be released? Unfortunately most of the time we can't have the answer to all of these questions, meaning that many of the puzzles presented in this book are quite incomplete. Textual criticism applied on video games gives us the opportunity to present to you the best approximation of what the canceled game was supposed to be, but not an exact recreation. What we're doing with this book is trying to present "variorums" - meaning, works of criticism and analysis whereby all variations are set side by side so that our readers can track how decisions were made during the games' development. In short, we're trying to be as objective as possible - after all, we really can't be 100% sure if these games were going to be any good, as most of us really didn't have the chance to try any of them. We can make educated guesses considering the development companies' previous work and the reputation of the programmers, designers, directors and scriptwriters, but sadly, we can't give definite answers to "what if" questions. Continuing with philology, what we're also applying is "eclecticism" - the fact that we're consulting as many witnesses of these games' development as possible (meaning, all the sources we can find), so that we can be sure most errors aren't being repeated. After all, if we have multiple accounts of what a game's creation (and subsequent cancellation) was supposed to have been, and most of them pretty much repeat each other, we can be sure we're getting some solid information. What one source omits, the others may keep; what one adds, the others may

subtract. With all this “intel”, we can come up with our best approximation of the truth. Since some of us collaborators are film critics, it meant the project could be approached in a very similar manner to which one analyzes movies. Yes, film criticism is all about saying if a movie was any good, but it’s also about analyzing both the form and the content of a motion picture - the way it was shot, lit, acted, edited, recorded and orchestrated, but also the plot, the messages it presents, and the way it develops it characters. With games, it’s quite similar. Yes, we analyze the “technical” side of things - gameplay, contols, graphics, music, sound and level design, but it’s also fair to include aspects such as main character personalities, quality of dialogue and plot. It depends on the kind of game we’re talking about, of course - there’s not much to say about character development if we’re talking about a puzzle game - but you get the gist. The more we know about form and content of a canceled game, the more we can know about what it was supposed to be, and maybe, the reasons why its developers or publishers had to cancel it. After all, errors in gameplay or script can always make a suit decide, just maybe, that a title is not worth releasing after all. Now, I’m not saying philology is the only way to approach a subject matter such as canceled video games, but it certainly felt like one of the most interesting ways. Hopefully, it’ll allow our readers to understand a little bit more about these potential hits - or flops, about gaming history, publishers’ history and what the companies behind games and gamers can do so that we don’t repeat past mistakes.

This book is all about reconstructing lost history - with any luck, we’ve managed to do just that.

Preservation of cancelled games

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Making a video game is not an easy task - not unlike making a movie or composing music. It involves, usually, a large group of people. It requires quite a lot of money and resources, and even if everyone does their job well and on time, there's a small chance that the final product will end up being... unsatisfactory. Like any work of art - because, at this point in time, I'm pretty sure we can call video games an art form - a game can be viewed both objectively and subjectively, which means that even an acclaimed masterpiece can be disliked by some people, and a terrible title can have a cult following. Who are the ones making these games? We have the level designers, the character designers, the writers, the directors, the programmers, the composers, and many, many more. It is a collaborative effort - not unlike, once again, shooting a motion picture - which means there are many variables that can go either wrong or right. Besides, there's also the money people, the publishers who decide if the game is worth making available to the public or not. And of course, let's not forget the deadlines, developers aren't necessarily given all the time they need in order to finish a game. It's because of all this that some games simply never see the light of day. There are many ideas, many concepts that probably looked good on paper, or that actually began development but, for some reason or another, were axed at the last minute. Anything can happen during the development of a video game: there can be problems with the story, with the level design, with the gameplay, or even with the console for which it is being made. If anything, this book will be about the "what ifs": what if that game had actually been released? What if the company's president hadn't renounced, or what if the publisher hadn't gone bankrupt, or what if there hadn't been a fight between one developer and the other? As with any fantasy, it is fascinating to think what would have happened if things had gone differently. But that's not the only reason to publish a book like this - it is important to preserve cancelled games because they are part of gaming history. An important part, actually. Many man-hours were dedicated to these titles; many ideas - most of them good - were thought out for them and many talents were discovered during their development. If anything, we should be paying tribute to all those people who dedicated days, even months or years to products that ultimately weren't consumed by anyone. It must be frustrating to be a creator, someone with a passion and a dedication to a very complex craft, and not being recognised for his or her hard work. So maybe that's what this book is about - recognition. Recognising that video game development is a tough job, sometimes even a thankless job, something that requires quite a lot of effort and time and money and resources and even sacrifice. But most importantly, recognising the work of people who never had the opportunity of receiving the greatest satisfaction any artist or creator can have: having his or

her work being released to the public. We must preserve the legacy of these titles - and the people who made them. People everywhere are interested in these titles because they are curious, because they want to know what very few people know, and because, ultimately, they'd like to play these unreleased games, to see what could have been, to experience what very few people have experienced. This book is for them, for those who want to know more about gaming history; about its developers and programmers and creators. But it is also for the developer, so that they know there are people interested in their work, people who don't want these games to be forgotten. But the preservation of cancelled games is also important for a more academic reason: it can help us contextualise. If one is studying the history of video games, and we already have plenty of books and articles online regarding this subject, it is as important to know about games that never saw the light of day as it is those which ultimately ended up in the hands of gamers around the world. It can helps us see what the status of the industry was at a particular point in time; it can help us understand how developers and publishers were thinking at the time, and it can even show us the early stages of an important developer or creator's career. Besides, it is important to note that many of these games are related to the history of the console they were being planned for. Take some of the cancelled games for Nintendo's Virtual Boy for example: titles like Zero Racers or Star Fox were planned and even commenced development, but were never released because the "portable" console was a colossal failure, both financially and critically. Moreover, it is important to consider and study these cases in order to learn. By finding out what happened during the development of these titles - all the good ideas and sensible decisions, but also all the mistakes - and transmitting all of this knowledge, one can hope developers around the world can learn what must be done (and what must not) during the development of a videogame. Obviously, the reach of all this information will ultimately depend on the amount of people that end up reading this book. Hopefully it will be a considerable amount. The point is, many of these cancelled projects can tell us as much, or even more, about consoles, companies and developers as the games that were ultimately approved. They are a product of their time, and a product of their parent company's way of thinking. They have fascinating stories, full of complications, drama, and ironies. They prove that the creative process can be quite complicated and that, if not handled well, it can end up ruining projects, or even careers. Preserving cancelled videogames is a fascinating, interesting and very important thing - equally important to preserving cancelled films, for example. Much can be learned about our past in order to work efficiently and happily in the future. If all the authors who collaborated in this book (including me) can be a part of that, part of the learning process, then we'll all be the better for it. This book is dedicated to all the people mentioned in this text - gamers, historians, developers, scriptwriters, programmers, and many more - but, most importantly, it's dedicated to those people who love video games (playing them, researching and writing about them) as much as we do. Hopefully, you'll find all these stories as intriguing as we do.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who's behind Unseen64?
We are a collective of gamers from all around the world who, in our limited free time, do the best we can to remember the canceled and forgotten games of our past. Unseen64 was created in 2001 by a group of Italian friends who wanted to remember some of their favorite lost games. Soon after people from other countries joined the Unseen64 staff to help manage the ever-growing archive, turning us into a worldwide group of nerds that love to remember the games we'll never get to play.

What's so interesting about cancelled games?
It's always interesting to learn about the unknown! Especially when it's related to your hobbies and passions. For cancelled games, it's exciting to discover a game that someone else decided to never release or to hide. Unreleased games have the potential to be as awesome as we can imagine, so we can always dream how great they could have been if only completed. Learning about cancelled games is just like learning about new games looming over the horizon...without being able to play them.

Why is it important to save info about lost games?
Each cancelled game is a part of gaming history even though it was never released. Some projects could have been amazing games, others bad, but on a personal, subjective scale, each unreleased game has the potential to become one of our favorites. If only released, a lost game would have been a new (good or bad) experience added to the vast world of videogames. Sometimes even the worst game can give us a couple of hours of fun by playing with friends or watching youtubers going crazy over it. A bunch of these lost games have the potential to do that and even more. They could have even changed the gaming industry! We would like to remember and save some memories from lost videogames for historic and artistic preservation, and also to satisfy our curiosity. On a collective scale, videogames are one kind of human art and it's important to preserve it as a memento of what human imagination and talent could have created.

How does the Unseen64 team investigate canceled games?
Honestly most of the info is already out there on websites, forums, and blogs. Studios often release some official info about a work in progress before it's demise, and we just need to collect all the data and media to create an organized article about it. Other times those lost games were not even officially announced and we randomly find out about them while searching for something else. Maybe we just have the title of a cancelled game with no other information. In that case, we start our search like anyone else: with Google. You can find almost everything with some patience and time. Sometimes we don't know that a game existed until developers contact us directly because they want to preserve something from an interesting project that never saw the light of day. They give us info, images or videos, to add a new missing piece to the long history of videogames. We even contact developers or individual staff members if they have any information on a lost game. An important part of this process is the trust that Unseen64 collected during all these years of archiving beta and cancelled games: we respect the privacy of developers and they can remain anonymous, just in case that there could still be some copyright issues by sharing memories or documents from those lost games.

Why does a game get cancelled?
We could say 30%of the time, the game was just not as good as they thought it would have been, so they cancel the project because it wasn't fun. Another 30% would be because the studio couldn't find any publishers interested in that kind of game, maybe because they thought that it wouldn't have sold enough to justify their funds. The other 30% would be due to financial difficulties, such as a lack of money to complete the game. For the remaining 10% of the time there are some crazy stories or other random reasons behind the cancellation.

How many cancelled games have you documented on Unseen64?
At the moment there are about 3,000 games in the Unseen64 website, covering cancelled projects and beta releases. Still, those are just a small part of all the games that were cancelled

for every console and PC system. If you keep in mind pitch projects and early prototypes, we could say that for each released game there are at least 10 unreleased ones. You can make your estimates! The lost games saved in the Unseen64 archive are also just a part of all the ones for which we have info, images, or videos preserved that have yet to be added to the site. Unfortunately, Unseen64 is just something we do in our free time and we don't have enough free time! We hope that by getting enough support and donations from readers, we could dedicate more resources to the website and archive even more lost games.

What is a "prototype" game?
A prototype game is an unfinished product that was constantly under testing and early development by the team that was working on it.

What does "alpha" and "beta" mean in video game development?
Alpha (a) and beta (ß) are two different Greek letters that are used to refer to different stages in video game development. A game in the "alpha" stage of development is often a rough concept of the full game, lacking many elements or mechanics. A game in the "beta" stage of development is more refined than the alpha stage, close to the final product, but still requires work. Often people just use "beta" to denote an unfinished game even if it's not in the beta stage. It's just simpler to have a common, single word to indicate multiple versions of the game that show interesting changes.

Where do leaked beta or cancelled games came from?
Sometimes a cancelled game or a beta version of a released game is leaked online or found by collectors and museums. These unfinished games could be sold after a gaming studio went bankrupt and all their properties were confiscated, or could have been preserved by former developers and then released anonymously on the internet, or sold to private collectors. Sometime incomplete games could be found accidentally in development kits/PC's, that are sold or lost when a team stop to develop games for a certain console.

How does the trading scene of lost videogames traditionally work?
Like every other kind of collections, prototype collectors buy/sell these games or exchange them for other beta/cancelled videogames that they are interested in. Prototypes of old games could even be found on Ebay. More "modern" cancelled games are harder to find or buy/sell/swap publicly due to copyright issues. There are private forums and marketplaces for the most "delicate" prototypes.

Have Unseen64 ever run into any legal trouble by posting information about a cancelled game?
No official legal trouble yet, but sometimes publishers or developers send us emails to ask us to remove images or videos from our archive because they don't want them to be public. Sometimes these same publishers were the sources of the displayed media that they want removed! Some unreleased games are still under nondisclosure agreements and we have to wait years before we can add them to the Unseen64 archive, even if publishers will never release them. In the end, we just have to wait for them to forget about their old products.

Any advice on researching lost games?
First of all, respect the work of developers and be sure to care about their privacy. Second, research as deep as possible on Google for the lost games and the companies you are interested in. Contact people using all the care needed, be ready to receive a lot of incomplete info and unclear memories, put all the pieces together, and then research even more to check your work Don't do it just to reveal some exclusive content that could make you popular; the focus should be preservation, not popularity. The most important thing is to preserve info that could be lost forever. Sometimes the only way to do it is to reveal what you found without attracting too much attention on yourself, or to save away something that cannot be shared publicly untill it will be safe to do it without any trouble for the people involved. Make a lot, a LOT of backups, offline and online: data should never be lost. You never want to loose your hard work to some technical issue!

Games you will (never?) play

Article by: Sam Minnich, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

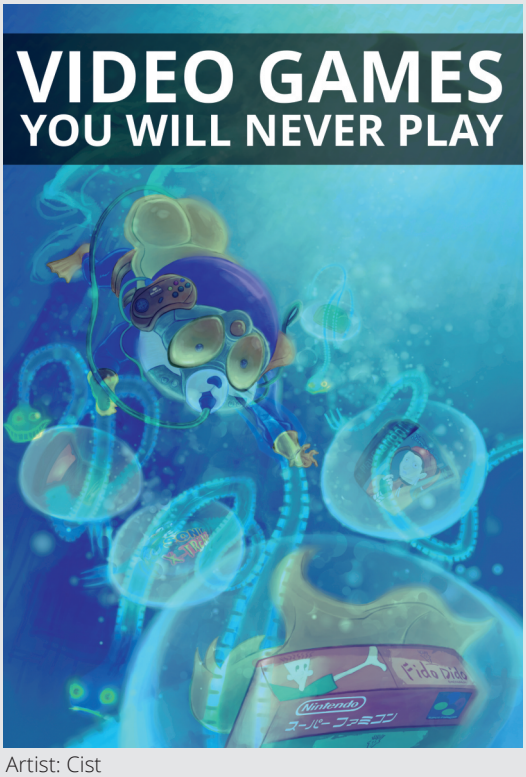
It is often heartbreaking to learn that a title you were looking forward to has been canceled. or to find out that your favorite game at one time did have a planned sequel that was scrapped due to bankruptcy, copyright issues, or even a lack of interest by the publisher. But just because a game has been canned does not mean that's always the end of the story. In some cases the project lives on thanks to the internet; through leaked betas and prototypes, playable demos, memories from developers and online communities, where fans can share their thoughts, research info and media, or even making homebrew games based on the available information. In this time and age, fans have easy access to game making programs which allow them to create fan-games based on their own ideas on how a lost title could have been, without needing the presence of a large corporation looking over their shoulder. Projects like Rockman Dash 3 (Mega Man Legends 3) have fans of the franchise that refuse to take "no" for an answer, and then take it upon

themselves to make the game they've been longing for. People that piece together what they can to save a game from being lost in the void of obscurity. The original sequel of Resident Evil titled by fans "1.5" was originally planned to be released in 1997 and a good part of the game was already complete. However, Capcom was dissatisfied with what was done so they scrapped it entirely to start from scratch and develop what became the official Resident Evil 2. Thanks to a leaked beta and a group of skilled fans, Resident Evil 1.5 is easily available online to be played, with bug-fixes and a remake in the works. At the same time some games whose sequel was canceled could receive a spiritual follow up. Titles like System Shock lived on in Bioshock. A few developers turn to crowdfunding to help their ideas be made, such as Keiji Inafune showing just how much people really wanted a new Megaman game with a successful Kickstarter campaign for his "Mighty no.9" after Capcom canned a few titles that featured the Blue Bomber. Koji Igarashi used Kickstarter to create Blood

Stained, a spiritual sequel to the classic Castlevania side-scrolling exploration games that Konami don't bother to develop anymore. Another interesting case is Playtonic Games, a company made up of former Rare Ltd employees that wanted to make a new 3D Platformer in the vein of Banjo Kazooie (BK), after Microsoft killed the series. Again, through Kickstarter they received a huge amount of money from fans to create their BK spiritual sequel, Yooka-Laylee. As mentioned before, another occurrence that permits us to play canned games is for their roms to be leaked online. We saw this happen many years ago with the popular StarFox 2 for SNES. This was cancelled by Nintendo when it was almost complete to make space for their Nintendo 64 sequel: Starfox 64. Luckily, someone shared a rom of StarFox 2 on the internet and gamers are now able to enjoy this awesome sequel that could have been lost forever. Some people dedicate their own time and money to scour Ebay and private collectors' forums for prototypes of cancelled games. Although they risk purchasing an expensive alpha version or tech demo with not much to play, the spoils they bring to the game preservation community is often tremendously worth it. Other popular and interesting canned games that have been leaked and preserved online are titles like Sonic X-Treme (Saturn), Dragon Sword (N64), Mini Racers (N64), Resident Evil (GBC), Sonic's Edusoft (Sega Master System), Glover 2 (N64), Sunman (NES), Werewolf: The Apocalypse (Saturn), Beyond Zero Tolerance (Mega Drive / Genesis), Unreal (Playstation), Tiny Toon Adventures (PS2), Redline Arena (PC and Dreamcast), Lobo (SNES), Saints Row: Moneyshot (Xbox 360 and PS3), Fireteam Rogue (SNES and Mega Drive / Genesis), Time Diver: Eon Man (NES), Hit the Ice (NES), Battletoads (GBA), Thrill Kill (Playstation), Starcon (PC and Playstation), Bounty Arms (Playstation), Propeller Arena (Dreamcast), Half Life (Dreamcast), Gauntlet (DS), Saints Row: Undercover (PSP) and many more. There are also times where games are rumored to be cancelled, drifting in the limbo we call "development hell", when a game is announced and then is not talked about for some time. Some consumers are discouraged by this and lose interest in the game, while others keep their hopes up digging through the internet to try to find any new information. Given time, even years, the game could be announced to be coming soon albeit on another newer console or as a completely new rebooted project. Final Fantasy 15 originally began production as a Final Fantasy 13 spinoff in 2006 for a release on PS3, but after about 7 years of small murmurs it was announced to be reworked for the PS4 and Xbox One, finally to be released in 2016. The Last Guardian, a spiritual sequel to ICO and Shadow of the Colossus, was originally announced in 2007 for PS3. After being forgotten for many years (leaving people to speculate its fate) it was finally announced in 2015 by Sony that it would come out for their PS4. Banjo Threeie,

which was hinted at the end of Banjo Tooie (released in 2000 on the Nintendo 64), was assumed to be in development for Nintendo's next hardware, the Gamecube. But when Rare was acquired by Microsoft in 2002 fans shifted to the Xbox for a new Banjo game, to no avail. Finally, Rare released Banjo Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts on the Xbox 360 in 2008. Over those 8 years Banjo's sequel met many changes, ranging from having a remake, to a racer, to finally a sequel with user-generated vehicles. And finally the cult-following Mother 3, also known as Earthbound 64, was originally planned as a launch title for the Nintendo 64DD in 1998. However, due to the add-on being a flop and the 3D world too complex to develop, the project was later canceled just to be announced again for the Game Boy Advance in 2003 and was finally released in Japan in 2006. These are just a few examples to show how unfinished games could still find their way out there, either officially or thanks to fan endeavors. We should never say "never". Overall, the amount of time, effort and even money that enthusiasts of unseen games put into either saving or remembering those projects is truly inspiring. When compared to other lost media like movies, television shows and books, video games take the cake when it comes to fan efforts to help them to live on. All the games you will read about in this book could have a chance to be played one day, if a prototype will ever be found... and thanks to people that use their own time and money to preserve the forgotten history of video games, in a few cases those cancelled titles are already available for your to download online. Maybe they will not be as awesome as you dreamt them to be, sometimes you will only see a non-interactive tech demo or play an incomplete mess of bugs and weird animations. That will still be an interesting experience that helps to remember something that was not meant to be.

Unseen Covers 2



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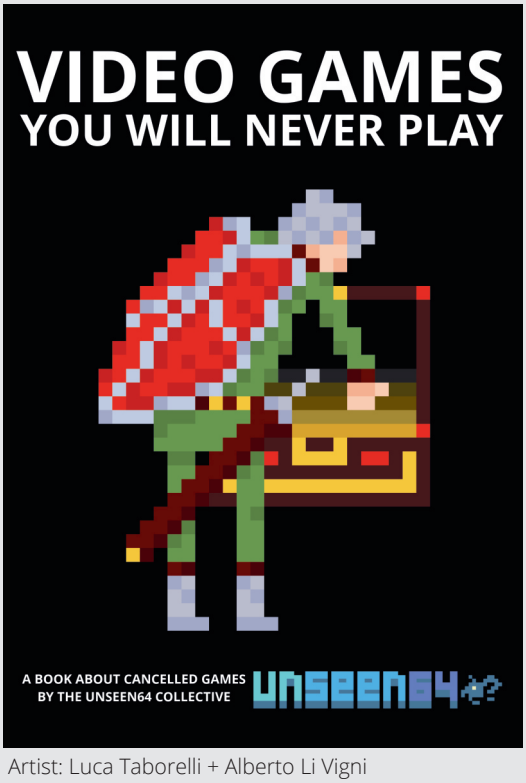

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Adam McCarthy

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Adam McCarthy has worked at Iguana Entertainment, New World Computing, Electronic Arts, Zynga LA, TapZen and Kabam on such lost games as the original version of Turok 2 (N64), Future Zone (SNES), Immortal Hockey (Arcade) and Tim Burton's "Mars Attacks" tie-in.

Luca: To begin with the interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your past experiences in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Adam: My name is Adam McCarthy. I was hired at Iguana Entertainment in 1993 as an entry level artist. It was my first job in the game development industry. I worked there for four years, working on: Side Pocket Pool, Pirates of Darkwater, Aero the Acrobat 2, NFL Quarterback Club '95, '96, '97 and Iggy's Wreckin' Balls. I left Iguana in 1997 to pursue a career specializing in 3D Character Animation, which wasn't available at Iguana at the time, and also for a desire to live back in California. I joined the team at New World Computing as a lead character animator, and worked on the Might & Magic, and Heroes of Might & Magic series. After 4 years there, I worked at a couple of other smaller companies, and in 2002 ended up at Electronic Arts as Animation Director of the RTS team, working on Battle for Middle Earth 1 and 2, Command and Conquer 3, Red Alert 3, and Command and Conquer 4. I left EA in 2010, did freelance animation for awhile before joining Zynga LA, where we released Empires & Allies, and Coasterville. I left Zynga in 2013 to help launch a mobile gaming studio called "TapZen", where we made and released the mobile game "This Means War!" In 2014. Shortly after the release of that game, the company was acquired by the mobile game company "Kabam", where I remain today, working as Art Director on an unannounced mobile strategy game.

Luca: Which are some of your favorite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Adam: I honestly don't play video games that much outside of work. I always play games that are in the genre of the type of game I'm working on, so that I have a good understanding of the products we're competing with, and to educate myself as to art styles, gameplay design, etc. The games I've been playing most recently are the mobile games "Clash of Clans, Hay Day, and Clash Royale".

Luca: While at Iguana Entertainment / Acclaim you worked on many popular games, going from 16 bit consoles to Playstation, Saturn and Nintendo 64. Did the team had any issues moving from 2D games to 3D ones? What kind of game making tools were available at the time at the studio?

Adam: I don't feel as though we had any issues moving from 2D to 3D, at least not on the art department. A lot of the artists (myself included) had been using 3D software packages before the games themselves moved to 3D, just because we were interested in the technology. That being said, once we started developing 3D games at Iguana, the management hired several 3D artists from outside of the company, and created a new department called the ATG (Advanced Technologies Group) as a companion department to the Art Department. So, all of the current Iguana Artists stayed on as 2D artists, while the new department handled the 3D artwork that was needed. These departments eventually evolved together as everyone learned newer art development techniques, but that's how the transition originally started.

Luca: Iggy's Wreckin' Balls was probably one of the most original games released for the Nintendo 64, with its mix of platforming and racing. Do you remember how the project was conceived? Was the final game in line with what was planned and was the team proud of the results?

Adam: This was a LONG time ago, so it's hard to remember exactly, but I believe the original concept was the idea of the game's lead designer, Jools Watsham. He began early prototype development with engineer Ian Dunlop, and the project grew from there. I was an artist on the project in the beginning, and I did some character concept designs, and then eventually some 3D

models and animations for some characters and set design pieces. However, I left the company when that project was in pre-production, so I wasn't around for production or the release. I never even saw the final product, other than a few marketing pieces. I've never played the game, and I have no idea if the team was proud of it or not. I do know that it didn't do very well commercially, which is a shame, because the team was very talented.

Luca: You also helped with development of fan-favorite Turok 2: Seed of Evil, how was to work on such an hyped titled? Do you remember anything major that had to be cut from the final game?

Adam: So, my involvement with Turok 2 was very limited, if not non-existent. Basically we had several development teams at Iguana at the time that Turok 1 was finishing up. They were not done with the first game when Acclaim wanted the studio to begin work on the sequel immediately, so my team, (who's project was recently cancelled) started working on the first version of Turok 2. For reasons that I'm not totally sure of, once the Turok 1 team shipped the project, the work that we had done was thrown out, and the Turok 1 team started their own version of the sequel, which is the one that eventually shipped. My understanding is that the team that made the first one was not happy about their title being given to another team, and so the decision was made to keep them happy and put our team off the project and that's when we began work on Iggy's Reckin' Balls.

Luca: It seems that at some point Iguana received from Nintendo a 64DD development kit, to start planning new games for the add-on. Do you remember anything about this? How did the team feel about creating games for an add-on and was any prototype ever developed for the 64DD?

Adam: I'm sorry, I don't remember anything about this. As a low-level artist, I wasn't heavily exposed to the tech tools that were used to develop the products at that time.

Luca: What did the team though about the Acclaim buyout of Iguana Entertainment in 1995? Were you scared to lose some freedom or was it welcomed as a stable resource of money to work on better games?

Adam: I think everyone had mixed feelings about it. I honestly don't remember any specific discussions that I had with other employees though, so I can only speak for myself. I think at the time that I was worried that too many things would change, but was also excited about having a more financially stable company behind us. The thing I remember the most was that there was a fair amount of money given out as bonuses to specific employees as a result of the acquisition, and yet some people who had been at the company from the start received nothing, so there was a bit of a hit to the morale over that point.

Luca: Do you remember any cancelled game in development at Iguana Entertainment during those years? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Adam: The first cancellation I was a part of was a game called "Future Zone". That product was in development when I was hired in 1993, and it was the first product I worked on, but it was never released. Something happened between the management at Iguana and the Publisher, and they cancelled the game and found a new developer. I heard that the new developer had it cancelled

before release as well, so I don't think it was ever made. The second was an original title called "Immortal Hockey", which was supposed to be a sort of futuristic Hockey sport game, where teams of two players each would "skate" around on hover boots on crazy 3D courses, with rules similar to Hockey. I did some character concept work on this, as well as some 3D modeling of the arena courses. This project was cancelled in early development, at which point the team was moved over to begin work on Turok 2. A few months into Turok 2 was when the team was moved once again to work on Iggy's Reckin' Balls. [...] we had originally started working on a game to go along with the Tim Burton movie "Mars Attacks". We had gotten copies of the script before the movie even began shooting, and I was working on pre-production on the project for awhile before it was cancelled. I don't remember why it was cancelled though...

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your time at Iguana / Acclaim?
Adam: Well, we were all a bunch of really young guys working in a foreign city (we had moved to Austin, TX from California), so there was definitely plenty of hijinx going on. There was a lot of drinking and partying in the evenings and weekends. I remember once a bunch of the guys were out drinking, and decided to go back to the office to play some of the video games we had around the studio, and the police showed up and searched all of them and they were almost arrested. I wasn't there, so I only heard the story second hand, but it was apparently a pretty scary experience. Luckily no one was taken in, and the cops just kicked everyone out.
One story that DOES include me, is that back then we didn't have full audio departments, and a lot of times the one in-house audio guy would have us developers do the voices for the games we were working on. One time I was asked to help out with some audio recording because I was friends with the audio engineer, and he needed help getting sounds for the Quarterback Club game we were working on. He also elicited the help of Pete Suarez, our grizzled ex-marine HR director. I found out that this meant that he wanted me to put on football pads and run into Pete at full force so that he could record what it sounded like when two big guys wearing pads ran into each other. We did that for several hours, and the next day I was so sore that I couldn't get out of bed and had to call in sick!

Luca: Is there anything in particular that you learned or that you like to remember from your time at Iguana Entertainment?
Adam: Well, it was my first job in the industry, and I joined the team when I was just 20 years old, so everything I learned about working in a professional environment, I learned at Iguana. We were all so young, so we all sort of became adults together. I also learned so much as an artist by working with such a talented team of artists, especially from my Art Director, first boss, and friend, Matt Stubbington. Unfortunately Matt has passed and is no longer with us, but he was one of the most talented artists I've ever worked with, and I still use techniques that I learned from him in my artwork today.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Adam!

Art Min

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Art Min has worked at Looking Glass Studios, Valve Software, Ion Storm and Junction Point Studios, Midway Studios Austin on such lost games as Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms (PC), Deus Ex: Insurrection (PC) and Sleeping Giants (PC, Xbox 360, PS3).

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Art: My name is Art Min and I have been in the games industry since 1993. I have worked at AAA game companies early in my career and done four game startups. I am currently doing the fourth one. I have always had that entrepreneurial spirit, where I always have an opinion on how to fix problems and you get promoted to fix the problem.

My first full time job was on the original System Shock. It is still my best game development experience. Looking back it was a combination of a lot of things that made it magical. An amazing team led by my mentor Doug Church, with guidance and protection from Warren Spector at Origin. I started as a summer intern from nearby MIT but was accepted fully on the team. The other programmers, Marc LeBlanc and Rob Fermier had just started full-time and they were and are amazing. Talented designers Dorian Hart and Tim Stellmach were great to work with. The environment was amazing for a new game developer. We played a new card game that just came out called Magic the Gathering together at lunch. We played Ultimate Frisbee and pickup basketball. There were no kids or wives for the core team and we all didn't know better on trying to do amazing stuff. Many times I left work at 3-5 am with the rest of team. It was probably great that we could focus on development and Warren and some of Doug could manage the reality of the business side.

My game development philosophy is largely shaped by that initial experience at LookingGlass. I was the summer intern and after a few weeks they said "you're in charge of the combat system". Say what! It's not that I was to go off in a corner and design the best combat system, implement it and say here you go. I needed to collect requests from the stakeholders - those designing the monsters, the levels, the programmers of the AI, and the leads. I would then present my proposal and of course, they found holes and I iterated on my design. Then once it was reasonable enough, I would start coding. Again, iterating with the stakeholders. So when they say "in charge", it really meant responsible for the system to the project and rest of the team. And since I knew what the stakeholders wanted, when I was implementing, I could make sure the code was flexible in the right ways. And as you implement and see things in screen, you can make changes which will then get validated by the team at check in meetings. But this is where the magic of game development happens - I have a saying that a good game goes to great through a 100 decisions the team makes as they are implementing. Design never survives implementation. Iteration is key. And it's not one amazing person with all the ideas, it's constant iteration of the game as you discover what works and what doesn't. I think having programmer/designers is key to this philosophy and LookingGlass Magic came a lot from this.

I have gotten into mobile gaming and my current project is trying to take the bite sized mobile game pkay experience and combine it with deeper city/world progression of a Civilization and social cooperative experiences enabled by having a mobile device with you almost at all times.

Luca: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Art: Since I have had kids, my playing time changed. And then mobile came along and I play and am addicited to more of the bite sized gameplay experience, and the social games.

I love the Civilization games but they seem to have gotten overly complicated. I play a game called Invasion, which is a modern Game of War clone for the social interactions. I personally really like the progression games on mobile. My favorite game of all-time is the original X-Com. I need to play the latest ones, again, my play patterns have changed.

Luca: Between 1993 and 1996 Looking Glass Studios released many cult following games

such as Ultima Underworld II, System Shock and Terra Nova: do you remember any game or even early pitches that were conceived, but never completed?
Art: There was a Better Dead than Red project and a Star Trek Voyager project. We had a few proposals that were pitched but never went anywhere. Sadly, I was focused on System Shock and then Terra Nova. I left shortly after Terra Nova was shipped.

Luca: Do you remember anything that had to be cut from the final version of System Shock? Is there anything that you wish you did differently at the time? For example some people found the controls way too complicated and fans even created a mod to freely aim with the mouse, something that was not available in the original game.
Art: My biggest mistake on System Shock was how I tuned the combat system. I had test levels that I fought all the bad guys. I did not do enough testing in the actual environments. There were some of the later levels that had interesting architecture and the combat wasn't interesting enough in those levels. It was a combination of my first experience and those levels I'm sure were coming in hot (as most LookingGlass games sort of came together at the end).
As for controls, we had that debate. Configurable key controls were not common and we had this interesting gameplay with leaning around corners. We were the first with that tech in games, so we didn't have some thing we could model after. In the years after System Shock launched (including CD Deluxe), things settle down for control standards and configurable keys - so I think the controls situation were a consequence of the exact time period.
I know there were discussion about cyberspace - especially since you needed to beat Shodan at the end in cyberspace and you could turn off Cyberspace for the rest of game. It felt similar to the end of Half Life and the Xen world with the jumping. It's always hard to make a climatic ending without doing some sort of big change. The nice thing about System Shock was that it did get the revised release with bug fixes and polish with the CD version. And soon the version in Unity will be coming out. I will definitely be playing.

Luca: While at Valve at the end of 1999 and early 2000 you managed their Online Content Group on such titles as Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms, the original, unreleased version of the now popular multiplayer game. What do you remember about that time, do you know why TF2 was put on hold and were there any other planned games that had the same destiny?

Art: This was the dot com times and TF2 was going to be this big jump from TFC. The problem was that Valve saw the growth of TFC and Counter-Strike and decided to switch over to emphasizing those. The TF2 that eventually launched was like the 5th iteration. There was a version that was more Battlefield. Another that was more RTS. Good companies try lots of things and Valve had great talent and deep enough pockets at that time to try a few things before and after HL2. When it was all hands on deck for HL2 to launch, it probably froze anything in development besides that.

Luca: The story behind the cancelled Deus Ex: Insurrection is a sad one, from what it was revealed in a great article by Joe Martin for Eurogamer, the project sounded like a step forward in the right direction for the series. Did you ever play the following Deus Ex: Human Revolution and if so what do you think about the game? Was it similar to what you had in mind for the lost sequel?
Art: Sadly I have not yet played DX:HR. There is a part of me that feels like it was personally a lost opportunity and don't want to bring back the memories by playing. As for DX3, I wanted to get back to roots and keep it simple. I think IW tried to be too new and some things worked and some things didn't. I wanted DX3 to "feel" the same as the first DX1 but updated graphics/platform.

Luca: The last year Warren Spector talked a bit on Reddit about the lost Half Life side-project that was in development at Junction Point Studios before the team was

acquired by Disney and Valve decided to abandon the episodic format: what do you remember about the game, its gameplay and backstory? How did the "Magnet Gun" work, do you have any example? How much was done before the cancellation?
Art: I had left Junction Point as our first game got cancelled. So sadly I didn't have much visibility on post-Sleeping Giants.

Luca: In older interviews Warren also named more lost Junction Point games, as an untitled "epic fantasy game" for Majesco, Sleeping Giants, Necessary Evil and Ninja Gold. Do you remember any details from each of these? Can you describe us what kind of games they could have been?
Art: Sleeping giant was the first and only project I worked on. Riding around on backs of dragons while uncovering the mysteries of the dragons waking up.

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience in so many different gaming studios?
Art: This doesn't exactly answer your question but I have an interesting story. When Warren and I started Junction Point, we looked at various deals to get started. We ended up starting with a crazy deal where CAA (the talent agency) was putting together an investment fund to fund game developments and give investors a tax break - like the Silver Screen investments for film. But an interesting option came up that would have majorly changed the game industry. We had talked to Ray and Greg of Bioware. They were independent still and they admired the emergent gameplay of Warren's games. Bioware games were heavy story games at the time and they wanted to get some of that DNA in their company. Also being in Edmonton, they thought an Austin studio would be a welcome warm opportunity to many employees. We could have become Bioware Austin before the group that eventually did Star Wars The Old Republic MMO, which is one of the reasons EA bought them. So who knows how many lives would have changed if we decided to join Ray and Greg. In the end, we wanted to be independent and do our own thing at Junction Point.
The end of time at Ion Storm was difficult from before the time Warren decided to leave Ion Storm to the point we started Junction Point. We were doing Deus Ex 3:Insurrection and people were excited on the team. But Eidos did not fundamentally support Warren and the kind of games he wanted to do. I believe we needed more oversight and management but I don't think they understood creatively what they had. And when they didn't understand and things started to go south, they exerted control that forced Warren to leave. And then at this time, Harvey Smith was also leaving to do his own thing. So the employees of the company were being pulled in a few directions. So many loyalties tested. The clear focus of a few years ago was completely lost. Both Harvey and us were recruiting the same people who were also trying to figure out what was going on at Ion Storm. And eventually Eidos closed the studio.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Art!

Brian Mitsoda

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Ross Sillifant, Philip Dempsey

During his career Brian Mitsoda has worked at Black Isle Studios, Troika Games, and Obsidian Entertainment and DoubleBear Productions on such lost games as TORN (PC), Werewolf: The Forsaken (PC), a Fallout pitch (PC), Seven Dwarves (Xbox 360, PS3).

Unseen64: First we would like to thank you for your time Brian. To begin with the interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your past experiences in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Brian: I'm Brian Mitsoda – currently owner/project lead at DoubleBear Productions where we are working on our second and third game currently. And maybe a fourth. It's a busy and exciting time at DB right now! Formerly, I have worked for Black Isle Studios, Troika Games, and Obsidian Entertainment. Many of the projects I have worked on at those studios never saw the light of the day, which is one reason I opened my own studio and why I've got so much to talk about with Unseen64. I got my start in Interplay QA, which then became in-house QA at Black Isle, which then became a designer position at Black Isle. Over the years I've been fortunate enough to work with some extremely talented people on some pretty exciting projects. Most of those games have been RPGs, and almost all of them have required massive amounts of story input and dialogue. As RPGs are time-consuming and expensive to make, they have also been historically more likely to get canceled. In my fifteen years as a developer, I've had two released games, one release that got revamped after I exited the project, two games canceled after significant work, and a few games that never made it past the early stages. So, in an alternate universe, you might have theoretically played several other games that I worked on.

Unseen64: TORN would have been your first game as lead writer at Black Isle, how did it feel to see all your hard work lost when it was canned? What type of character was the protagonist supposed to be? Did you plan multiple endings depending on which of the three factions the player would have followed?

Brian: I'm not sure I was ever given the title of lead writer on TORN, although I certainly ended up writing a fair amount on that project. It was my first game as a designer/writer. Most of the story was worked out as a team under the guidance of Dave Maldonado, who is one of the most creative people I've ever worked with. There was quite a bit of freedom on the project, and I did get to have a lot of input into the look and feel of the races, the design of some of the areas, and the creation of a few of the companions. There was never a shortage of lore or design to do on the game since we were crafting the world from the ground up. Most of Black Isle was brought in to help out on that one as we tried to shift from 2D engines to a 3D fantasy version of the SPECIAL system. Unfortunately, due to the 3D engine technology at the time and some pretty strict timetables, TORN was killed a few months after it was announced, which equaled about slightly over a year of development time.

It's been a while, but the major thing I liked about TORN was not the title. Nobody liked the title. But aside from that, we were building a pretty interesting universe featuring a pretty complex mythology with gods that embodied Order and Chaos, but rather than the common angel/demon divide, either side could have gods with intentions that would be perceived as good or evil depending on the perspective. For example, an order god might want to use their followers to wipe out an entire continent to build things from the ground up and make it fit their perfect design. The machinations of the gods were really where a lot of the characters got their inspiration and ability. But we didn't try to introduce all of the gods in TORN – we had a few that were directly named in the story, but most of the world lore was strictly in the background and based on interpretation by all of the races of the world. The actual story in the game was a lot more relatable – a mad king triggers a series of events, a plot that sent you to different sections of the world, a personal journey spent picking up new companions and abilities, and a good amount of reactivity to your decisions in each chapter. (Unfortunately, I've lost most of my outlines and images from the project, so I don't remember the finer details of the story.) My favorite race was the ogres, which were enormous and had been modeled slightly after Potemkin from Guilty Gear

– they were also the first to be cut as a playable race. We had some neat designs for some of the gods that you did meet. They were very alien-looking compared to humans - one had a cenobite vibe and one had a very Indian mythlogy/JRPG boss kind of look. While we had elves, halflings, goblins and orcs, we tried to get away from the standard Tolkien vibe and got crazy with the appearance and social structures of many of the different races as much as we could. I do think that there were a lot of non-traditional fantasy elements that would have made it a great setting. If there's one regret that I have about the project, it's that we didn't get to release a fantasy game that got away from the standard trappings of D&D/traditional European influence.
It was fairly ambitious and the tech just wasn't there – we were even developing co-op, which very few RPGs to this day have. Being that it was my first game, I spent unhealthy amounts of time working on it and as is typical for junior designers, I enthusiastically threw all kinds of ideas at the wall (mostly Dave) at all times. And, oh yeah, it was soul-crushing when it was canceled - many members of the team also lost their job the day we found out TORN was done, so it salted the wounds a fair amount. With the benefit of years of experience, I can honestly say that TORN wouldn't have been completed without an extended deadline and a major investment in the tech and team size. It's a shame that the team's creative endeavors never got to be enjoyed by players, but you can take a look at the small amounts of screenshots released and tell that it had a long way to go before it got to market.

Unseen64: Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines by Troika seems to have had a complicated development process, to say the least. In the end the game was able to see a release, despite incomplete. In the years that followed, it has grown into a cult success thanks in large part to the hard work of the writers who created characters and a world people wanted to interact with. Was there any major part of the plot or characters that were cut from the released version?
Brian: I've gone on record before as saying that there really wasn't anything major cut from Bloodlines, and that in turn is why it's pretty obvious some parts received more love than others. We were adding elements right up until the end. There were many late nights spent trying to make sure that all the planned art and design content was in and functional.
The only major element that was cut early on was multiplayer – that was being worked on by a separate studio. It was hunter versus vampire team multiplayer. I really didn't have much to do with it, so other than having tested an early build, I don't remember much else about that mode.

Unseen64: There are rumors about a sequel to "Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines" that could have been in early development at Troika before they had to close down, anything true about this?
Brian: We had thrown around some ideas for an expansion before the game shipped, but that didn't really go too far, though it would have brought a few characters back. We never plotted out or pitched a true sequel to Bloodlines. We did start prototyping a Werewolf: The Forsaken game quickly with Bloodlines assets in the hope of selling it to another publisher, although due to Bloodlines' sales numbers, nobody picked it up. There was a story, pitch doc, and a demo all done in a matter of weeks. In the demo, you could transform from the Smiling Jack model into the werewolf model, pick up and bat around items with physics, and generally cause chaos on the downtown map. It was already pretty fun, and the Werewolf setting seemed like a great license and a way for us to continue making White Wolf games. I would still love to revisit the White Wolf universe one of these days – there's an endless amount of stories that can be told in that setting.

Unseen64: In 2004 Troika tried to pitch an "Untitled post-apocalyptic RPG " as a Fallout sequel but in the end the IP was acquired by Bethesda. Did you take part in this pitch and if so, did you already thought about a possible story for your own, lost version of Fallout 3?
Brian: I was not part of that pitch because I was crunching on Bloodlines, although I did get to see

the tech for the engine Andrew Meggs was developing, and although it wasn't done, it was very exciting stuff. It was particularly designer-friendly and that made it pretty easy to put together levels from tiles and switch from an isometric to a first-person perspective on the fly. Aside from some pitch docs or concepts and models, there wasn't too much done for the post-apocalyptic game, especially considering the whole studio was wrapped up in shipping a game. RPGs just weren't getting publisher interest at the time. It's really bizarre to see a Fallout release become a massive event in popular culture – back in 2004, no one wanted to make another post-apocalyptic RPG.

Unseen64: Unfortunately Troika had to close down in February 2005, what do you remember about that time? Was it something that the employee foresee?
Brian: The owners were always upfront about their financial situation with us. We knew it was coming, but we also wanted to do everything we could to get a pitch picked up to keep the lights on. Even though we had just come off a major crunch, we threw ourselves right into the process of getting another project going. Some of us worked for over a month without pay just to help make it happen. By 2005, it was obvious that it wasn't going to happen, we gathered our things from the studio, and Troika closed its doors. I think it was around that time we started seeing Bloodlines being revaluated in the press and on its way to becoming a cult classic.

Unseen64: There is a bit of information out on the internet about a canceled Obsidian Entertainment game you worked on known as Project New Jersey / Seven Dwarves, based on the tales of Disney's Snow White, with a dark twist. Some interesting details on the game were shared by Kevin Saunders and we read a few message board posts from 2008 attributed to your wife where she said this was her "one that got away" and that it was "too good for this world" Do you share that sentiment about it? Are you able to tell us more details about the story and how it would have transformed the classic fairy tale into a dark one?
Brian: If I could resurrect any project that I worked on, it would be this one. This was essentially our action-RPG version of a Pixar movie crossed with a first-party Nintendo game. I don't know how much is still covered by NDA, but it was obviously inspired by Disney's classic movies artistically, although script-wise we definitely wanted to capture the characterization and emotion of Pixar films. Conceptually, it was a darker fairy-tale type of story, but it was mostly focused on the journey of the teenage protagonists as they journeyed around the land meeting up with these eccentric little men and using their unique powers to advance through the plot. It had a lot of heart, great monster and character concepts by Brian Menze, and very interesting level potential. I think if it had come out, it would be considered a classic today. It still hurts to know we'll never finish it. If DoubleBear ever gets big enough, I would totally do something similar to it.

Unseen64: Now that the final game has been released for over 5 years at this point, how do you feel about your unused work on Alpha Protocol looking back? Did you ever check in on the final product to see just how much or little of your original work and its DNA made it to market? When your vision for the game was removed from the process, how did that feel?
Brian: I have never played the final version of Alpha Protocol. Aside from the dialogue system and some of the design/ideas of the characters, I think only some of my dialogue on Steven Heck was kept in because Travis Stout inherited him and he told me that he kept as much of Heck's original script as possible. The draft that I worked on was much different and had Mike as a junior CIA agent that found himself in the middle of a vast operation that he needed to investigate (and stop) in order to clear his name – very similar to the movie Three Days of the Condor in tone. We had recorded a fair amount of it and I know the voice actors really enjoyed the direction – I had written some of the parts specifically for actors I worked with on Bloodlines and cast some real VO heavyweights for some of the main characters. We even got to record VO in an ensemble fashion, which is what a lot of animated shows and movies use to capture more realistic reads. I don't think any of it made it into the game, which is a shame, but it probably wouldn't have fit a tone change. After working on it from the proof of concept and seeing the game shift direction multiple times during development, I wasn't as passionate about it at the end, so having my work tossed out didn't hit me as hard as some of the other projects I've worked on.

Unseen64: How has the experience working within the chaos of the gaming industry

and the cancellation of many promising projects shaped how you approach things at DoubleBear Productions today?
Brian: Since DoubleBear is independent, it's up to us to say whether or not we commit to a project. We've got a much more rigid budget to work with and a smaller team, and that does influence the types of projects we can do, but as much as possible we try to get the whole team excited about the direction before we commit. Starting with our current project, changes have happened at the prototype stage. As with Troika, I'm pretty upfront about budget or finances with my team. As an indie company, there's a lot more transparency internally and within the community, because it's not just about the game, but the development process and how genuine the developer is with the audience. Games at the indie level don't get dropped unless calamity hits or the team decides to mutually kill it. It probably goes without saying but it's a whole lot easier to work on a game you're passionate about when you don't have to worry that tomorrow's the day you walk in to work and hear that it's been shitcanned. I know for a fact that you'll get to meet the characters that we're creating right now, and that makes it so much more exciting to work on them.

Unseen64: Having worked on ambitious cancelled games and projects that were released with heavy cuts, if a game reaches a certain amount of completion would you feel better to see it released in an incomplete form or would you rather see it cancelled?
Brian: Gamers and businessmen are always going to say they want it released. Designers want to hold back and fix their games forever. To date, I have never released a game I was 100% happy with. It's tough to say, because if you've invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into a game, yeah, you need to recoup that. But if the money wasn't an issue, then yes, I would rather kill an incomplete game than release it. Today's audience absolutely will not overlook flaws at all. Back in the day, you could release a rough game, especially on PC, but now everything has to be at a higher degree of polish if you want to release it.

Unseen64: If you remember any other lost game or interesting cut made during your time at Black Isle, Troika or Obsidian, we'll be happy to read about it :)
Brian: I think I covered everything I worked on, not counting projects that only made it up to the pitch document stage.

Unseen64: Do you remember anything interesting from those undeveloped pitches that you could describe to us? Maybe some potential game that if only green-lighted could have became a new masterpiece?
Brian: Everything sounds good at the pitch stage. It's not really a game at that point, just an idea. Sometimes the gameplay doesn't really shine until you start fooling around at the prototype stage. It's hard to predict if a game is going to be a "masterpiece" at the pitch stage.

Unseen64: As most of the Unseen64 Staff is italian, we just LOVE to eat good food :) What is your favorite food ever? Any secret recipe that you would like to share with us?
Brian: YES! Cooking is one of my favorite activities to unwind with. After a day creating virtual doodads, I love to actually physically prepare something. Cooking and gardening – those are hobbies of mine. I need that tactility. My greatest culinary achievement of the last few years was doing a timpano (also called a timballo). Here's what you do. Cook several of your favorite Italian dishes – I did a homemade all-day red sauce with pan-seared veggie sausage and slow-cooked meatballs, fresh pesto, roasted garlic and spinach, a mushroom cream sauce with sun-dried tomatoes, and layers with ziti and fresh cheeses like chunks of mozzarella, provolone, and shaved parmesan. Create a pasta-like dough with several eggs, semolina flour, and normal flour until somewhat stiff, then roll very firm but thin. Line a large metal bowl with the dough, then set up your layers of each food and the cheeses, and finally seal the dough at the top. Bake for about an hour at 350 F. When the dough looks golden, take it out and put it aside to cool for about 30 minutes. When it has cooled, flip it onto a serving plate – you now have a cake full of delicious. It's a special occasion food and takes like an entire day to put together, but it's a real crowd pleaser. You will definitely need a crowd to eat it.

Unseen64: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time!

Centre for Computing History: Jeremy Thackray

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Tony Peters

The Centre for Computing History is a charity and heritage organisation with a strong focus on education. Much more than a museum, it hosts hands-on exhibitions, learning workshops and a wide range of events. Most importantly, it makes the history of computing relevant and fun for all ages! Located in Cambridge, the Centre's vision is to increase understanding of developments in computing over the past 50 years through exploring the social, cultural and historical impact of the digital revolution. The growth and innovation of the computing revolution has been fast and furious. Having created our global society, whereby our thinking, means of communication and the way we organise our lives have been irreversibly transformed, it is now impossible to envisage a world without computers or the Internet. There is now a generation growing up who know very little about how this has all come to pass. The Centre for Computing History tells this story.
www.computinghistory.org.uk

Unseen64: To begin with the interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about who you are, your studies and your role at the Centre for Computing History.

Jeremy: I'm Jeremy Thackray, Assistant Curator at the Centre for Computing History. My job involves managing our archive, putting on exhibitions, running educational workshops and helping with the day-to-day upkeep of the Centre. I used to write for gaming websites and then became qualified to work in museums. It's not often that you'll find a job that mixes both of those interests!

Unseen64: As we can read in your website, the Centre for Computing History is a pioneering educational charity that opened in Cambridge in 2013: can you tell us more details about the project, what you are trying to achieve, why it's important to preserve vintage computers / technology and how it all started?

Jeremy: The Centre began as a private collection that got too big. Instead of downsizing, the Director of the Centre took the ambitious decision to start a museum. Since then we've taken in vast numbers of donations and we now have tens of thousands of objects in the collection. We hope to provide a fun mixture of education and nostalgia to our visitors and to increase understanding of the computer revolution. It's important to preserve this technology because of the impact that computers have had on the world, but also because so much risks being lost because of obsolescence if we don't.

Unseen64: Do you think that videogames could be seen as some kind of art? Are there any "characteristics" that we can value to decide if a game should be considered art or not?

Jeremy: This question's always a dangerous one, because 'art' is such a nebulous concept. Trying to bring together Michelangelo's David and Call of Duty under one umbrella term is a bit of a daft thing to try and do! What I think we can all agree on is that games can cause intensely emotional responses in users as powerful as anything in cinema, literature or music. You can call that art if you like. I think videogames certainly merit the same level of discussion and criticism as the established arts.

Unseen64: What kind of exhibitions and workshops are organized by the Centre, for individuals and schools?

Jeremy: We display many objects from the collection in our exhibition spaces, with as many switched on and running as possible. We're devising more displays to show off certain computing concepts, such as Boolean logic, and we're considering emulation for older machines to give a

sense of how they worked to visitors. We have also just started a temporary exhibitions program. We began with 'ARM: 25 Years' in November, celebrating the impact of ARM processor architecture, and this Easter we're launching 'Lights! Camera! Play!', which looks at the relationship between games and cinema. Soon we'll be holding events based around Viva Computer, our oral history project which aims to capture the memories of leading figures in the UK computing industry. We run lots of programming and hardware workshops on both modern and retro tech. We make extensive use of the Raspberry Pi, but we also teach BASIC on BBC Model Bs from the 1980s. The coding logic and principles taught then are just as applicable now, even if we use different languages.

Unseen64: Preservation is an important aspect of any museum. How are computers, consoles, calculators, games, etc. stored and maintained at the Centre for Computing History? How to let visitors to enjoy and play with vintage technology, without risking to damaging those artifacts?

Jeremy: We want to have machines up and running for visitors, but that does indeed cause problems. We have an excellent team of volunteers who help maintain our hardware, and we also receive a lot of donations of duplicate material that we use for spares and repairs. We don't have rarer machines switched on unless they are reliable and supervised, so as to maintain them as long as possible. Most of the rarer machines are in fact kept in storage, and even for the commoner items we keep our best version (often in original packaging) in our archive. In the end we'll have to turn to emulation, but when this happens our knowledge will still be enhanced by having the originals to hand.

Unseen64: How are pieces for the Centre obtained? Is there any piece of technology that you would like to archive, but that is already long lost and cannot be preserved anymore?

Jeremy: We receive a lot of donations from the general public: hardware, software, manuals, magazines and ephemera. There are a few things that we've gone looking for ourselves, and the original private collection contains a few pieces that were specifically sought out (like an Altair 8800, one of the very earliest home microcomputers). There are many machines that it would be great to preserve, but from the gaming point of view there's so much lost material already. It's such a young industry that there's often little associated documentation from the early days of gaming. What I'd love to see most, though, is developers willing to let archives store the source code of their games. It's one thing to collect a retail copy of a game, but for long term preservation the source code is vital. Big museums are starting to latch on to this: the Museum of Modern Art in New York has made it a priority to collect source code for their design collections, for instance.

Unseen64: Do you receive any aid from traditional museums or private fundings? How

do you interact with other artistic and historical organizations to find support for your researches?
Jeremy: We receive some support from local companies such as ARM and Microsoft Research, and we work together with local museums, particularly the Cambridge University museums, on some projects. We're receiving more and more enquiries from researchers.

Unseen64: Our readership is global, and with each area of the planet comes a unique cultural gaming narrative. What are some features of gaming culture in the United Kingdom that are distinctly unique to the area?
Jeremy: We have a rich history of games development in this country that really began in the 1980s, thanks to a great school curriculum and the availability of British-designed computers like the BBC Micro and Sinclair ZX Spectrum. Today the development scene in the UK is very diverse, ranging from huge studios like Rockstar North (Grand Theft Auto) to indie darlings like Hello Games (No Man's Sky). It's hard to pin down a particularly British aspect of gaming culture, as we're so wired into the globalised gaming world, but we love an underdog in this country, so small-scale indie development gets a lot of goodwill from UK gamers.

Unseen64: Does the Centre for Computing History contain any unreleased or prototype consoles, games or accessories? If so, could you tell us what they are and how they were obtained? If not, would the museum be open in the future to taking them in?
Jeremy: We have a few items of interest in the collection, such as a Test Playstation 2, an Xbox 360 prototype case and numerous homebrew and unofficial Pong consoles. We also have plenty of rare released products like the Power Glove, Virtual Boy, FM Towns Marty and Apple Pippin. We haven't gone hunting for any of these items – donors have approached us as word of our work has spread.

Unseen64: While it's already difficult to preserve old (and new) videogames that were officially published to the market, there is a whole world of cancelled projects that never seen the light of day and could be easily lost forever. What can be learned from an unreleased or unfinished game? What place do they have, generally speaking, in gaming history?
Jeremy: Unreleased games are interesting for a number of reasons. They can shed light on the development process, something which even today is quite obscure to many people. They can also show what games developers wanted to make before business considerations were taken into account (since these business decisions are a major cause of cancellations). This provides real insight into the creativity of developers. Another thing they can do is provide inspiration to future developers – a game that got cancelled in one time period might have been misunderstood and ahead of its time; a similar idea could be more than viable today.

Unseen64: Preserving history and art is often tough and gruelling work, but every historian has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience at the Centre for Computing History?
Jeremy: It's tempting fate to say this, but thankfully I can't think of any catastrophes that have occurred here in my time! One of the most surprising things here is the stories and objects people come to us with. We've had some donations that have been very valuable to our work, but meant nothing to the donors – they've just been clearing out a garage or attic of old items. One donor brought us at least six carloads of items (probably more) including a suite of BBC Micros that form the foundation of our schools programme.

Unseen64: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?
Jeremy: My personal favourites are The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time and Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic 2: The Sith Lords – all the stuff I was playing as a fourteen-year-old, essentially! KotOR 2 is fascinating as it is so patently incomplete – I sometimes imagine how incredible it could have been if Obsidian had had enough time to finish it properly.
Lately I've been playing Batman: Arkham Knight and the evergreen Team Fortress 2. I've also sunk far, far too much time into Mount and Blade: Warband...

Unseen64: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time!

Computer Spiele Museum: Andreas Lange

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Tony Peters

The Computer Spiele Museum is a museum for digital interactive entertainment culture opened in 1997 in Berlin (Germany). The permanent exhibition is focused on the history of games and how they have evolved over the years. It also provides a look into the gaming culture that has blossomed around it and turned it into the multi-billion dollar industry of today. They do not only invite visitors to explore the halls of the exhibits, but they also give you the opportunity to play with the museum itself. At night, the windows are transformed into surfaces for varying and entertaining interactive exhibits. At the Computer Spiele Museum you can find more than 22.000 computer games and applications, more than 300 consoles and computer systems, more than 10.000 magazines and books, plus arcade game machines, literature, art installations, archived documents and objects, merchandising goods and video tapes.
www.computerspielemuseum.de

Unseen64: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about who you are, your studies and your role at the Computer Spiele Museum.

Andreas Lange: I am the director of the Computer Game Museum. Since we are a privately held museum, we don't have a big team, which means that I have several hats on. So I am also responsible for curation and PR. I have a background in theater and religion science. I like to play games personally , but wouldn't describe myself as a hardcore gamer. My first motivation is cultural.

Unseen64: As we can read in your website, the Computer Spiele Museum was the first institution ever (in 1997) to present a permanent exhibition on the theme of digital entertainment: can you give us more details about the project, what you are trying to achieve, why it's important to preserve videogames and how it all started?

Andreas Lange: The Computer Game Museum was founded by the non profit organisation, which also started the German games age rating system in 1994. I was asked by the CEO if I wanted to become the founding director, which I delightedly affirmed. The initial idea was our belief that computer games have a big cultural impact on us and our society. At the time of the opening of the museum at 1997, they often were underestimated as pure toys. To open a museum, which are trusted platforms in our society, just for games seemed a good strategy to point out their cultural value and impact. Since then, the approach of our exhibitions was to show the many interesting aspects of gaming culture. In doing so, our goal is not to convince our visitors that games are the greatest thing in the world, but to provide them with information and enable them to make a sound judgement on their own. Of course entertaining our visitors is always an important objective when we create an exhibition, too ;)

Unseen64: Do you think that video games could be seen as some kind of art? Are there any "characteristics" that we can value to decide if a game should be considered art or not?

Andreas Lange: Games, like films, are not necessarily, but can be, art. In my understanding, games are art when entertainment is not their only purpose. Rather than stimulating people to see their/ our life from a different perspective and/ or touch them beyond the pure excitement caused from the gameplay. The most important criteria in my opinion is the intention of the creator(s). If they are claiming that their games are art, their works should be considered as such. Anyway, the borders between art and non-art are fluent in the area of games and one can doubt if it makes sense to keep the traditional between both areas.

Unseen64: Preservation is an important aspect of any museum. How are consoles,

games, etc. stored and maintained at the Computer Spiele Museum? What are some tips and tricks for keeping gaming equipment in good, working order for as long as possible?
Andreas Lange: Frankly we don't store our collection in rooms with climate control and air condition. But we have a continuous temperature of 20 degree Celsius and rather dry humidity, which is not too bad. Because storing games, hardware and other items, which represent gaming culture, means to handle very different materials from all sorts of plastic, papers and metal. Strictly speaking, each of these materials demand specific conditions. To keep electronic hardware alive, it is always good to switch it on from time to time to prevent parts from "drying out".

Unseen64: How are pieces for the museum obtained? How is it decided what to archive, what to show to the public and what not to?
Andreas Lange: Most parts our collection grew from private donations. Mostly we accept donations, even if we have the collectible already. The background of this is that the conditions are different, and it is always good to have a substitute for something thats out of order. We only reject something when it is out of our scope like mainframe computers and other sheer office devices or if we have it in sufficient numbers. If we buy something it is usually in the context of a project, when we need something specifically that we don't have. The main selection criteria for the usage in an exhibition is if an exhibit represents a story, which we want to tell. Usually this is more common than exotic items. Of course sometimes it is also appropriate to show special and rare collectibles, because to see such physicality is also very attractive for some of our visitor groups. It is in the nature of the medium exhibition to display physical exhibits, which are able to produce an aura.

Unseen64: Do you receive any aid from traditional museums or the German Government? How do you interact with other artistic and historical organizations to find support for your research?
Andreas Lange: We are a private independent museum and only receive public money when we apply for it in a project context - at least sometimes. With other museums, we are collaborating mainly in the area of borrowing exhibits and sometimes help them with their special exhibitions.

Unseen64: Our readership is global, and with each area of the planet comes a unique cultural gaming narrative. What are some features of gaming culture in Germany that are distinctly German?
Andreas Lange: In the common opinion, games from Germany are not very successful

internationally, especially in front of the background of the (big) German market size and educational system. Traditionally, the main reason for this is seen in the desire of Germans to make things technically perfect. In the context of games, it means that often the game play balancing and action are rotating out of scope of the developers. This opinion could be seen as congruent with the love of many German players for simulation games. While you find many exceptions to the aforesaid, one German speciality seems to be true: in no other country has such an elaborate system of protection of minors been established than in Germany. Since 1994, we have had a German age rating system only for games, which is based, since 2004, on federal law. Last but not least, home computer platforms, compared to console platforms, were and still are more widespread in Germany than in USA, Japan, UK or France.

Unseen64: Does the Computer Spiele Museum contain any unreleased or prototype consoles, games or accessories? If so, could you tell us what they are and how they were obtained? If not, would the museum be open in the future to taking them in?
Andreas Lange: Most of the unique items in our collection are art works or parts of specific game development legacies, like concept artworks, which we receive, sometimes directly from the developers, after the game is released. We also own a replica of the Brown Box, the prototype of the first home video game, which its inventor, Ralph Baer, crafted personally. In principle, we are open to take other unique and rare items, in spite of whether or not it is our main focus.

Unseen64: While it's already difficult to preserve classic videogames that were officially published to the market, there is a whole world of cancelled projects that never saw the light of day and could be easily lost forever. What can be learned from an unreleased or unfinished game? What place do they have, generally speaking, in gaming history?
Andreas Lange: It is difficult to answer this question generally. While unreleased games could teach us something in principle, it must not be the case necessarily. Usually unreleased games could tell us something about certain aspects of failing. For private collectors, unreleased games are mainly of interest because they are rare.

Unseen64: Since becoming a part of the museum, what is a stereotype that you have found that people possess about video games and/or about museums (in general) that you would refute?
Andreas Lange: Of course most of our visitors are familiar with games and are aware that they are an important part of our culture, which justifies putting them in a museum. Others are surprised how rich game culture is and how they are connected with rather traditional culture. But even the first group is often surprised how long games have existed, before they started playing personally. In regards of the stereotype on museums, some of our visitors are surprised how lively and social a museum can be ;)

Unseen64: Preserving history and art is often tough and grueling work, but every historian has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience at the Computer Spiele Museum?
Andreas Lange: When we opened our recent permanent exhibition five years ago, we had to send all exhibited games, independently of whether they were presented interactively or just as video, to the German age rating system for games. The goal was to get a 6 years age rating, because it is mandatory for us as a private museum to have families and school classes as visitors. With modification of two videos we were able to get that rating for our whole exhibition. But we are supposed to be the only museum in the world which has to send in its exhibition to an age rating system, which of course is a serious limitation of our work. Luckily, we meanwhile were able to show games with an older age rating in the context of a special exhibition ;)

Unseen64: Which are some of your favorite videogames? What are you playing lately?
Andreas Lange: In principle, I like games which focus more on intellectual than on physical skills. Becoming older, the reaction becomes slower and also the tenacity is dropping. The latest game I played with great pleasure is the local multi player game Chalo Chalo, a great independent game, which we just showed in our running special exhibition.

Unseen64: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time!

Felix Kupis

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Felix Kupis has worked at Westwood Studios, Flextech, Savage Entertainment, Volition, Bohemia Interactive and Wargaming Seattle on such lost games as Raiko (PC), Disposable Heroes (PC), Jurassic Park: Survival (PS2) and Descent 4 (PS2, PC).

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Felix: My name is Felix Kupis and my first job in the game industry was with Westwood Studios working on Command & Conquer. I came to Westwood from NewTek and was the only guy in the studio that knew how to do video capture, compositing and editing so I was responsible for that work on C&C. If you play GDI mission 1 the first target you kill is Nikoomba, which is my real picture from 1993 in a dictator outfit. I worked at Westwood for a while on some awesome games such as Kyrandia, Lion King, Lands of Lore 2, Monopoly, C&C, Red Alert and various expansions and then went on to start my own game studio that secured Blizzard as a publisher for our game. After that fell apart I went on to work on Descent 4, then moved to Savage entertainment where I worked on another bunch of titles including a couple James Bond games, Battlefront 2 PSP, Medal of Honor Vanguard and more. I got a chance to transition to working on Serious games (military simulators) while working at Savage and worked on a few Darpa Projects, mainly a convoy ambush trainer that got adopted by various militaries around the world, including the United States. I went on to work full time with a company called Intific on more military projects where I had to get a Secret Clarence to work on simulators for platforms such as the A-10C, AC-130 gunship, Predator UAV, and a Navy Seal SDV sim. I did more work on military and police sims over the next few years and had my own company and did work at Bohemia Interactive on VBS2. I got back into regular games about 3 years ago when I started to work for Wargaming Seattle, where I currently work on a yet unannounced multiplayer game where I am a Lead Designer.

Luca: Which are some of your favorite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Felix: Some of my favorites are Everquest 1, World of Warcraft, original quak based Team Fortress, Diablo 1,2, World of Tanks, Civilization (all of them) Ultima 1-5, Wizardry 1,2, Demons Quest, etc. I can go on all day but I think my 2 favorites of all time are Everquest 1 and World of Tanks with World of Warcraft a close second. Lately I have been playing World of Tanks, The Division, Dark Souls 3, Destiny, Civ 5, and Total war : warhammer.

Luca: At DICE 2008 Blizzard talked about some of their lost videogames and one of those titles was Raiko, a concept that was originally conceived by you in mid / late '90 while at Flextech Inc. The game was meant to be some sort of "3D Samurai Diablo", can you tell us more details about its planned gameplay, backstory and how you were able to successfully pitch the project to Blizzard?

Felix: As a fan of Diablo style games and Asian folklore I wanted to make a game that was essential a 3D Samurai Diablo. This was built on a 3D engine but was played from a similar view to Diablo. You could turn the camera around to see more of the environment and the game was coming along but got cut when Vivendi bought Blizzard. Myself and my crew of a couple people that did the work on the game traveled down to E3 when it was held in Atlanta and set up a meeting with Alan Adham and Bill Roper on this game demo we made for Raiko. I got to know Alan Adham when I told him my story of basically being kicked out early from Westwood (I was leaving after finishing Red Alert) for wearing a Blizzard shirt. At that time the heads of Westwood hated Blizzard for "stealing" their RTS ideas so after wearing the shirt to piss off my boss I got the boot early. Anyway was a good in with Mr. Adham and got me the meeting at E3, it was actually the very last meeting of the show for Blizzard. After looking at our demo I remember Alan and Bill Roper both had a huge smile on their face and told us this is the game we have been looking for.

Luca: Another mysterious game concept that was created at Flextech was Disposable

Heroes, what happened to it? Do you remember any detail about what kind of game it was meant to be?
Felix: After Raiko got cancelled, Blizzard kept all the rights to it so we were basically looking for a new project before we ran out of funding. We pitched Disposable Heros to a bunch of publishers including GT interactive, Atari, and some others. Disposable Heroes was basically Halo way before Halo but nobody would give us the funding for the game before money ran out and we had to shut down Flextech. I still have the original documents for Disposable Heroes, its really funny reading them now and looking at how close it was to Halo.

Luca: While at Volition in 98 / 99 you worked on Descent 4, a most-wanted sequel that unfortunately did not see the light of day. Gamers had to wait until April 2015, when a new Descent was successfully funded on Kickstarter, but we can assume that the new Descent 4 will be really different from what the Volition team had in mind in late '90. What do you remember about the lost Descent 4 project? Were there any major changes to the formula or new gameplay mechanics? Do you remember why it was canned?
Felix: Descent 4 turned into Red Faction. The original concept was that you were a miner that can dig all kinds of passages in an almost fully solid environment. I left to work in South Africa right around the time that the game started turning into Red Faction. I don't remember why Volition didn't just do a real Descent squeal and went that route.

Luca: A few months ago we collaborated with Volition to release online the cancelled Saints Row: Undercover for PSP, an interesting project that was in development at Savage Entertainment. However Undercover was not the only lost game by Savage and another popular title that never seen the light of day is Jurassic Park: Survival for PS2 and Xbox. Can you tell us about what was planned for Jurassic Park 3's story and gameplay? Would it have followed the movie's plot? Would it play as some sort of mix between Tomb Raider and Dino Crisis or was it more like an open world adventure? Do you remember how much was done on the game and why it was never released?

Felix: Jurassic Park: Survival was a game I worked on for about a year at Savage. The game followed some of the story line from what I remember but had mostly a plot we developed at Savage. The game was basically a Tomb Raider knockoff and nothing like Dino Crisis, and was set in the Jurassic Park universe.

Luca: Are there any other interesting cancelled game or lost pitch concept that you worked on during your career? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?
Felix: I worked on the pitch for the original Aqua Teen Hunger Force game that Savage decided to pass on even though the publisher wanted us to make it. Also did some work on a South Park pitch for Savage that kind of never materialized. There was alos a game concept at Savage that we worked on for a AAA game using the Unreal engine that also didn't get funding. This was more of a stealth game set in space from what I can remember.

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories back from your long experience in creating games?
Felix: When working at Westwood on the Command and Conquer expansion, we decided it would be fun to stick in a hidden mission with a full intro. So we did a videotape of Kane giving you a full briefing then went on the make a full Jurassic Park style mission. The game went gold before anybody figured out this Easter egg was in the game, man did we get in trouble! That was pretty fun but impossible to do something that big these days.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Felix!

Frederic Villain

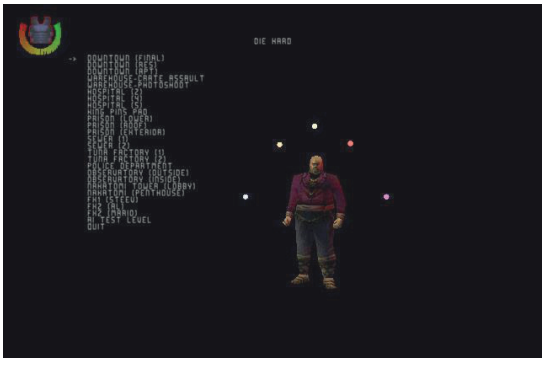
Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Frederic Villain has worked at Haiku, Bits Studios and Ubisoft on such lost games as RiQa (N64) and Thieves World (N64).

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Fred: I started programming when I was 11 years old, and I have always been crazy about computers. I've been working in the game industry for over 20 years. I started my career in Paris, in Haiku Studios in 1995, right at the time the PlayStation was released in Europe. At the time I was interested by both an art or programming career, but the needs of the studio where on the coding side. So I started working as a console programmer, which gave me the opportunity to try my hands at all the areas of console programming, from audio to rendering, from engine to gameplay. Despite having some of the best talents I have met, the studio went under in 1997. I then moved to London to work at Bits Studios (with a few friends from Haiku) where I spent 8 years working on various N64, PlayStation 2, Xbox and PC games and engines. I continued focusing on engine and gameplay development during this time. When the studio started focusing more on online gambling games and less on console games, I decided to move to Ubisoft Shanghai. This was a big change on the personal and professional level. So far I had been working in relatively small studios (~50 employees) focusing on one or two games. Joining Ubisoft was an opportunity to work with larger teams on larger AAA games. I have now been in China for over 10 years focusing more and more on high level gameplay systems and AI. In the past years I have been managing the Wildlife AI team of Far Cry 4 and Far Cry Primal.

Luca: In a few old gaming magazines and websites there was a rumor about a Nintendo 64 version of Die Hard, but the project never materialized and Bits Studios only released "Die Hard: Vendetta" for GameCube, PS2 and Xbox. What do you remember about the lost N64 version? Was it a first person shooter too and how much was done before to switch the project to "next gen" consoles? Another mysterious Nintendo 64 game in development at Bits Studios was titled "Muzzle Velocity"... do you remember anything about it? It seems that it could have been an early version of Die Hard 64, but with an original IP.



Fred: Disclaimer: my answers are to the best of my knowledge what happened, but this was a while back so some of those might not be 100% accurate :) As far as I can remember (this was a while ago and I was not directly working on those projects), "Muzzle Velocity" was the original version of "Die Hard: Vendetta" on N64 before it became a license game and moved to Game Cube. There was never a "Die Hard" N64 version developed at Bits. "Die Hard: Vendetta" was developed with a branched version of the multiplatform engine TWED (Thieves World Editor). I had contributed to develop the engine for N64 originally with Nathanael Presson for "Thieves World" who ultimately got released as "Rogue Ops" on next gen consoles.

Luca: What happened to RiQa and Thieves World? There is a lot of confusion about these two unreleased N64 games and we'd like to finally find out the truth. We know that they were two different projects but it seems that the released Rogue Ops took some elements from both. Is this true? Why were they cancelled and how much was done on the Nintendo 64?

Fred: When I joined Bits Studios with other ex-employees/friends from Haiku Studios, the main focus of the studio was RiQa for N64. A very ambitious third person game with a main female character called RiQa. As far as I can remember the team had already been working on the game for a couple years. I was assigned to the project and worked on various gameplay and VFX tasks as well as the support of the infamous 64DD as the content of the game was supposed to be huge. The project had a lot of difficulties on the tech side and the team was fighting between the ambitions and the hardware/software limitations. At the same time Nathanael Presson which I knew from Haiku, was working on creating a new multiplatform engine for the company. I was working on and off with him to add support for the N64 to the engine. After 6 months at Bits we presented the tech to Foo Katan (the boss of the studio) and he was sold. While the RiQa engine iteration cycle was very slow (level made in Max and long building times to get it on console), we had an Editor/Engine that allowed LDs to create levels in the Editor (using Booleans and Portals inspired from the original Unreal Editor) and allowed them to play directly on the console by a press of a button. This was the beginning of the "Thieves World" project, another third person game with a female lead (at the time Tomb Raider was an inspiration for everybody and female leads were very popular!). Thieves World, in turn, had a lot of ups and downs. After a few more months the RiQa project was cancelled and the focus of the studio became "Thieves World". We continued working on the engine and the gameplay of the game for several years. At some point another team in the Studio started developing Muzzle Velocity, which later on became Die Hard: Vendetta, using the same Editor/Engine and we contributed to support this team. We had some problems on the creative side on TW and we spent a lot of time iterating on the design. As the N64 life cycle reached its end the decision was made to move on to next gen and we had to upgrade the engine significantly to push the tech to benefit from next gen consoles hardware. A lot of people left the team in the years after this reboot and at some point I was the only original member of the team left. The game was almost canned but we signed a deal with Kemco and the game was ultimately rebooted to become "Rogue Ops". The original TW project was supposed to be a stealth, no weapon game, which created a lot of issues on gameplay side. Kemco decided to introduce more shooting and we finally got a game. TW was not inspired by other titles at the time like MGS or Splinter Cell, it was actually imagined before or at the same time as those games. But the development cycle was so long that at release time those games had long been released.

Luca: Jas Austin (another former Bits Studios developer) told us that Thieves World almost became a Rare game: is true that they wanted to move development from Bits Studios to Rare? We wonder if Thieves World could have became a Perfect Dark spin-off. After Rare and Nintendo published the original Perfect Dark on the Nintendo 64, they also wanted to release a quick sequel called "Velvet Dark" that would have been a third person action / stealth game.. maybe the two projects are related.

Fred: Yes as far as I can remember Jason is right! While the TW game had design difficulties, Bits Studios was audited by Rare. A presentation of the game and the tech was done to Rare after several months of audit and while the tech was recognized on N64, Rare did not decide to acquire the game or the studio. They were already working on Perfect Dark at the time and some

concepts in both games are similar, but this is as far as it goes regarding the history between those two games.

Luca: It seems that in late '90 Bits Studios and Nintendo had a great business relationship, with many titles in development for Nintendo 64, GBC and GBA, some of them even published by Nintendo themselves (R-Type DX, Warlocked). Unfortunately most of these interesting projects nevers seen the light of day. Do you remember any other undeveloped pitch or cancelled game that was in development at Bits Studios, other than Fido Dido, RiQa, Thieves World, Die Hard 64, Muzzle Velocity, Jet Force Gemini GBC, Wizards and Jet Riders?

Fred: When I joined Bits the studio already had a long history with Nintendo and apparently a very good partnership, which was the reason RiQa was in development. The handheld games where developed by original programmers from the early days of Bits and working outside the office, so I have very little knowledge of what happened on that front. I think Jas was one of those guys.

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your time at Bits Studios? Is there anything in particular that you learned or that you like to remember from your time at Bits Studios?

Fred: I learned a lot during my 8 years at Bits. I was lucky enough to work on very challenging projects and challenging tasks. I had the opportunities to work on third person gameplay systems were I had to do a lot of camera, controls, animation and locomotion work as well as low level engine development. There was not much literature or resource at the time (early days of the net) so a lot of concepts had to be invented or re-invented. At that time everything was created from scratch, which is something that rarely happens now. A lot of games at the time also got cancelled and this taught me resilience and perseverance. Thieves World was a very hard project to work on, mostly because of the duration of the project and the multiple re-boot. But I am still proud to that day, it got finally released as Rogue Ops, even if it was not a massive commercial success. I think this makes me appreciate even more the critical or commercial successes of other games I was lucky enough to participate to and develop, later on. The (AAA) game industry as evolved from small groups of very talented people trying to create amazing games, to huge teams creating huge games with an incredible amount of content. The complexity today is really on the production side and the scale of the games. Having experienced small teams where everybody had to do a bit of everything, definitely helps me understand and appreciate the work of everybody on the different teams, from art to audio, from gameplay to AI, from engine to tools, from GDs and LDs.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Frederic!

Gabe Cinquepalmi

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Gabe Cinquepalmi has worked at 8th Wonder Games, EA Tiburon and Double Fine Productions on such lost games as, Drachen Zor (PC) and Specs (Xbox 360).

Luca: First we would like to thank you for your time: to start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what is your role today at Double Fine.
Gabe: I'm Gabe Cinquepalmi, from Double Fine Productions. I've been in the industry for almost 20 years now, beginning as a concept artist and animator at a startup called 8th Wonder Games, then moving into UI design, texture art, and then production at EA Tiburon. For the last 9 years, I've been producing, designing and writing at Double Fine. Most recently, I was the Project Lead for Costume Quest 2.

Luca: We'd like to know more about your gaming tastes, what are some of your favorite videogames?
Gabe: I've been gaming since I can remember toddling into a stranger's house after spying him playing Frogger through his screen door. After that I played everything I could get my hands on. We had a Discs of Tron machine in our Piggly Wiggly that I would play every time we hit the grocery store. Later I became an arcade rat, loitering until the owner would give me the key to give myself unlimited credits. I love trying all genres and platforms, and try to play every game I can that does something noteworthy or original. I've been affected by everything from Smurfs on the Colecovision to Rastan in the arcade to Mars Attacks! pinball to Zelda on the NES to Super Metroid on my SNES to Space Quest and Full Throttle on the PC to Paper Mario on my N64 to Psychonauts and Beyond Good and Evil on my XBOX to GTA San Andreas on my PS2 to Pikmin on my Gamecube to Last of Us on my PS3 to Beat Sneak Bandit on my phone to Bloodborne on my PS4. And a million games in between.

Luca: Did you know about Unseen64 before this interview? What do you think about our "mission" to try to remember those games that we'll never play?
Gabe: I hadn't heard of Unseen64, but I love the idea of hearing about games that never got their chance. Sometimes it's for the better, but I'm sure there are a ton of great games that didn't get to see the light of day for dopey reasons. I'll bet there's a lot to learn from those stories.

Luca: We love what you are doing at Double Fine with public show of your "Amnesia Fortnight" series, it's really interesting to see internal pitch of possible-games and to play some of those prototypes. What do you think about to let gamers to see and play unfinished versions of your projects? For the indie-scene it seems more common to release alpha versions of games that will be completed later, but for bigger publishers it does not happen often.
Gabe: I think it's great for aspiring developers to get to see as much of the innards of the process as possible. If I were coming up during this generation, I'd be vigorously devouring those videos! As a developer, it's an amazing yearly opportunity to get a chance to work on your game idea with an incredible team. I don't know of anywhere else in the industry where that can happen. It's also a great palate cleanser if you've been working on the same project for a while.

Luca: Drachen Zor is a cancelled multiplayer brawler that was in development by 8th Wonder / SouthPeak Interactive in late '90 and it looked lot of fun. The graphic was beautiful for its time and it used 8th Wonder's proprietary V-Engine 3D voxel technology rather than polygons. What do you remember about this lost game and why it was canned? It seems that the team planned to released a demo of the game, do you remember if it was ever done?
Gabe: My best memories of making of Drachen Zor were about the people. I made a lot of friends back then that I still keep in touch with today. We were all new to making PC games, and had to go through a lot of trial and error. A multiplayer voxel fighter was probably a little too ambitious

for a company comprised mostly of an ex-medical CD-ROM crew and some kids fresh out of school, but we were too inexperienced to know that we were too inexperienced... and we had an irrational confidence and exuberance that would help us negate most of that. We worked on the game for two blissful years, fueled by Mountain Dew and Watchamacallits. I remember animating in 3D Studio R4 using forward kinematics, having to use dry erase markers on my monitor to keep registration points for feet. I remember the pizza guy across the street would call us "computer brains" when we came over to get a slice. I remember that we had an SGI Onyx computer for Softimage, that only one guy could use. It was the size of a small refrigerator and cost as much as a house. During production, 3D PC cards came out for a few hundred bucks that pushed polys faster, making everyone who owned one of those overpriced, oversized hulking cubes feel rather silly. I also remember getting carpal tunnel from playing too much Quake after work, and had to switch to a Wacom tablet exclusively for a few years. Random memories. Good times. I don't remember how we got into voxels, but we were sure that it was the silver bullet that was going to set us apart. We were going to be the first game to market with that tech. Our organic characters were leaps and bounds better looking than the industry standard box men running around. I think a Star Trek licensed game ended up coming out eventually, and then it petered out for a few years until it resurfaced as a hip new indie look. Southpeak was a great ally at first. They treated us and the game well, and weren't shy about digging into their bottomless coffers. We showed at E3 in Atlanta at a giant kiosk filled with actors dressed as our main characters, and then rented out Planet Hollywood for a fancy party afterwards.They got respected comic artist, Bill Sienkiewicz, to do our box cover and poster. We were riding high! Shortly after that, Southpeak suddenly pulled the plug [cue Price is Right fail sound]. At the time, Southpeak told us that they were going to move into a more kid-friendly direction, and went after licenses like Looney Tunes. Our violent fantasy fighter (with blood splats) did not fit into their plans any more, and voxels were dead now that the 3DFx card was selling like hotcakes. Our company was left in the lurch. We tried to "pivot", as the kids say, to move the company into a different direction, but we didn't have the notice or capital to make it. 8th Wonder was scattered to the wind. A few years later, after having worked on some great games, I can look back and see that they probably cancelled it because it just wasn't the best game. It wasn't our time.

Luca: A few years ago at New York University's Game Center Tim shown an interesting prototype for a new adventure game by Double Fine called "Specs", that would have used Microsoft's Kinect to give imputs to the main protagonist and to interact with his "emotions". The demonstration had great humor and lot of potential: what do you remember about this project and why it was never completed?

Gabe: I remember prototyping the first iteration in our scrum tracking tool (Scrumtious) oddly enough. The first rev involved a prisoner, a rat and a dagger. We had a lot of fun working on this nebulous project! What was it? Who knows? We didn't know. Microsoft didn't know. But we had a direction and we'd probably know it if we stumbled onto it. That's a super fun mode in which to work... to have time

and money to potentially bumblef*ck into something groundbreaking. I'm not sure I'd say that this game wasn't completed. Microsoft paid us to explore interactive fiction and we explored it. At the end I think we were both fairly satisfied, although I'm not sure we necessarily ended up with what we expected. That it didn't turn into a shipped product didn't mean that it wasn't a success. It was a fun experience to me, it just didn't translate well into something easily marketable at the time.

Luca: Talking about the games that you worked on and that were released in the end, do you remember anything major that had to be cut from the final version? Is there anything that you wish it would have not changed, even if you were satisfied with the final product?

Gabe: Every game I've worked on had to cut something major. After a while you understand that you have to boil things down to the core essentials, and that you usually enter production with your pie-in-the-sky version (even if you don't think you did). The biggest, most painful cut I remember going through was during Brütal Legend. We had an entire fourth faction, The Motorfreeks (my personal favorite), that had to hit the cutting room floor along with their fourth of the world. We had even already modeled and implemented all of the characters in multiplayer! Deep cut! Fletus, that faction's leader, was the lone character that made it into the final game as a secondary mission contact. We also ended up cutting the environment for the Tainted Coil faction, and decided that they would just invade and taint the other two environments. World size-wise, we chopped the game in half. It still took us about four years to make.

Luca: As most of the Unseen64 Staff is italian, we just LOVE to eat good food :) What is your favorite food ever? Any secret recipe that you would like to share with us?

Gabe: Picking a favorite food is like picking a favorite game: Impossible! I was raised on Italian food, but I think I could eat a burrito for every meal. I also have a penchant for Kunafa, a middle eastern dessert I stumbled upon when I moved to San Francisco. It's warm goat/ricotta-like cheese topped with shredded semolina pastry, rosewater syrup and crushed pistachios. Yum!

Luca: Well, that was the last question, thanks again for your time!

Grant Gosler

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

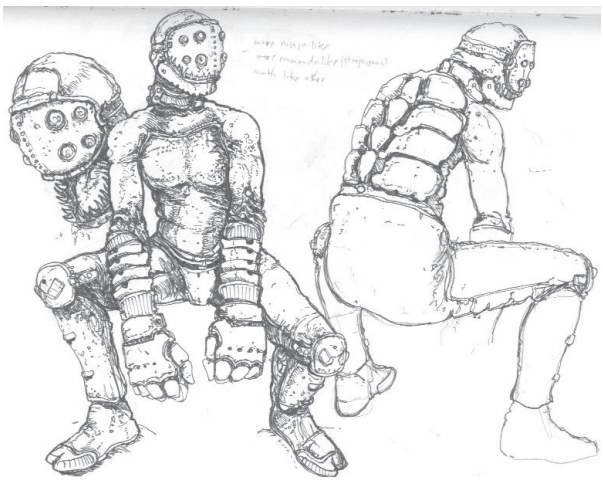
During his career Grant Gosler has worked at Terminal Reality on such lost games as Nocturne 2, Demonik, Sundown and many more lost pitches.

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Grant: I am Grant Gosler. I have been a professional developer since 2000. Most of my contributions have been art related in nature. Throughout my career I have worked in both 3d and 2d capacities, creating all sorts of production assets ranging from characters , environments, weapons, vehicles, rigging, and animations. I also worked much of that time creating concept art, in sometimes an unofficial capacity, however later on it would be on of my proper responsibilities. Today, I still do much of the same stuff. I also found new and surprising opportunities in Video Game focused education that one can encounter more and more of in Technical Colleges and Universities across the world. These kinds of programs were not as prevalent in my formative years.

Luca: The first BloodRayne was originally meant to be a sequel to Nocturne, the cult horror game that Terminal Reality released in 1999, but the original publisher Gathering of Developers was closing down and the team decided to develop a new IP, while still having a few references to Nocturne. What do you remember about the early development of BloodRayne, did anything ever started on Nocturne 2 and were there any features that had to be changed or cut from the final game?

Grant: I remember a few details from Nocturne2 development. There were a lot of Ideas going around the team that was left over after BlairWitch:Rustin Parr - Which was really just another Nocturne installment in itself. Jeff Mills and Joe Wampole and Chris DeSimone were having a lot of meetings and kicking around ideas for settings, enemies and story arc. We were doing a lot of concept work on creatures and enemies and environments as well. I remember a submarine bay was discussed as very early location, as well as a Nazi excavation site/ archeological dig with huge train fed auger machine uncovering an old Daemite temple. There was also this huge snake temple with giant snake edifices encircling each other. Rayne could climb up these and work over various enemies. I remember too a very detailed Kirkbride style asylum. One particular standout stillborn idea was a devilish carnival run by freaks. It was based on some sort of a an eerie, clandestine group that traveled around the countryside and took part in bizarre occult rituals at the expense of locals. They were decked out in all kinds of creepy and colorful livery, but were a gruesome bunch. At the center of it all was a tall and mysterious carnival leader with a wide hat huge, lumpy overcoat and a bandaged face that showed not a hint of any kind of human skin.



Where his hands ought to be.. he had some huge rusty shears. Now...This guy floated around like he had no legs, and I remember in battle he would sometimes open his coat to reveal he was nothing inside.. just a dark hole..kind of a void, from which numerous diminutive homunculus-like creatures would emerge on thin leash like tethers. And occasionally he would snip these creep pets free to come skittering towards you all ravenous like. Beyond that, he could also slash you up with his

scissory arms , and under the right circumstance ,... envelope you I within his awful coat if you stayed too close in melee range for too long. It was all an early idea, but one I thought might be fun to mention. There were many other early creatures and characters that were cut..like some Kappa creatures, a series on Ninja and Samurai demons, a hulking Brute with withered legs, and some wacky, bad mannered vampires that eat with their hands. Some enemies carried over intact. , Daemites are most obvious as they are featured in BlairWitch: Rustin Parr as an enemy.

Luca: Portable BloodRayne projects for PSP and 3DS were also in development at some point, but never released. Were Terminal Reality working on those or did Majesco give the IP to another studio as it happened with BloodRayne: Betrayal? Do you remember anything about these two lost games, their gameplay, story details or why they never seen the light of day?

Grant: I know Mark Randel is a true master of the game platform, and could probably port Bloodrayne onto an abacus on a dare..... But, to be truly honest, I do not have any kind of information on these products or their fates.

Luca: A legendary lost game in development at Terminal Reality was Demonik, a project hyped for its use of a new version of the Infernal Engine and high profile collaborations with John Woo's Tiger Hill Entertainment, horror author Clive Barker and Marvel artist David Finch. Demonik was also featured in "Grandma's Boy", a movie with lots of references to Terminal Reality: what do you remember about the game, the collaborations with such high-profile names and the making of the movie? Funnily enough, Demonik is successfully released in the movie, on the contrary in "our reality" Majesco canned the project for some reasons.

Grant: While I was not dispatched fully to the crew tasked with the lion share of the Demonik work, I did have varying levels exposure to the game and its development process from time to time. I always enjoyed what I was seeing and playing, -from the early concepts and the lovely game assets that were coming out of that team; to a host of new breakthroughs in our proprietary engine technology being showcased in the gameplay from day to day. If I am remembering specifics right..I recall having loads of fun with a build that featured some character possession powers, a "murder"-stream of murderous crows one could release onto folks, and using a telekinetic grip to dunk people into chemical vats. All rather gruesome, but I assure you these were very bad guys I was dealing with, honest. I never worked with Clive Barker or Adam Sandler myself... I did get a kick out of the many cross collaborations the IP spawned. Plus, the tech that was developed made its way into other titles across the company as standard engine features. I did always lament the fact it was never given a proper release. Alot of good guys put in some great work on Demonik, and I always admired and appreciated their efforts.

Luca: Sundown was the game that Terminal Reality were working on with Guillermo del Toro, but unfortunately it was quietly cancelled According to del Toro, the game would have been similar to Left 4 Dead: do you remember any details about the gameplay, its story and settings, how much was done before the cancellation and why it was never completed?

Grant: In regards to the Sundown Pitch, ...I don't remember what year. 2006? 2007?. maybe? I worked on a pitch around that time with a few guys that revolved around

humans facing off against a horde of parasitically necrotic animated human-hosted creatures that were adversely affected by the sun. In this pitch, these creatures were dangerous at night... however, in groups they would emit a cloudy, yellow spore-like substance (the medium we called it) that could obscure the sky during the day. This clouding could indicate large concentrations of them, and make high traffic areas dangerous,.. as it was not only visually murky within the yellow cloud , the creatures were more physically capable. I feel their emissions also came across like a terra-forming effort in a way. Like they were pushing humans out. They had various stages, and their own physiology based on it. There was even this sluggy infesting dart-like creature certain units could could project into humans to create new infested hosts. This could give them a projectile of sorts. I remember we discussed the different types also including a fat version that acted sort of like a walking smoke generator for their icky smoky by-product. I don't know if this was the only pitch created or delivered, or if this is what Del Toro is referencing in his statements. I just came up with general ideas, created some art, and put it together in a hasty pre-pro pitch. I remember at the time only having a very short amount of time to execute on anything and send it out. I never worked directly with Del Toro himself, so I cannot be sure. However, ... I did very much enjoy the opportunity generating concepts.

Luca: As games like Call of Duty were really popular in 2005 / 2006, Terminal Reality created a prototype demo for a military FPS set in Iraq, to pitch it to various publishers. One of these publisher saw the demo and loved it, but said they wanted to make a different game, not a military shooter. That "other" game became the Ghostbusters tie-in which was released in 2009. Do you remember anything about this military FPS demo? Did it have any particular features to set it apart from similar FPS at the time? Was the project just abandoned when the team signed their contract to develop Ghostbusters?

Grant: I do remember the FPS demo. It was a rather slick demo. I don't remember anything that would have made a huge departure from other shooters at the time, but I think that was the mission of the exercise. It successfully emulated the current products that were out there at the time. Maybe it was perceived that too many departures might have been more of a risk for a traditionalist Mil shooter genre. Additionally, Ghostbusters was huge project opportunity on the horizon that required all hands on deck. So we folded a lot of people into that, and everybody was excited to work on GB.. But all this is just theory on my part, as I was only an artist and not abreast of the will of the publisher in this instant.

Luca: At DICE 2009 Terminal Reality shown a tech demo for their new Infernal Engine featuring "The Stranger" (the protagonist of Nocturne) and rumors started to spread about a Nocturne sequel in development at the studio. Any truth about this?

Grant: While there was some new developments for the stranger at that time...I did not see any true effort into a new Nocturne come into play. I actually created the concepts for that character and his weapon for that particular exercise and I was very excited at the time. A new Nocturne would have been a truly tremendous thing.

Luca: Do you remember any other game that was cancelled at Terminal Reality? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?
Grant: I cant speak to any projects that were ongoing, then ultimately canceled. There were many pitches that did not make it into any sort of production at all. Too many to really go into, and it might make your publication too big to contain on page or storage device.

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories back from your time at Terminal Reality?
Grant: Oh wow. I got a million of 'em. Both funny and catastrophic.. and sometimes some of each. I cannot mention a lot of them as they might incriminate folks I know and love. However I have a few, but I will withhold any names to protect the identities of the innocent. Well I remember one story in which we lost track of one of our favorite engineers. Lovely guy.. one of my most favorite characters of all time. He was gone,... and not answering his phone. We all got worried something might have happened to him. So we sent an away team to check on him. At his place we found him passed out on the floor unconscious. Thinking it might be something very serious , we checked him out and eventually got him to come around. We all expected some gruesome tale to accompany his state. And what we got was much more than we bargained for... It turns out he ingested a helping of hyper-cooled orange juice. This must have affected an arcane combination of his cerebral cortex and pineal gland or something, as it caused him to instantly fall into a trance/coma like state. It was said by some he even astrally projected, and became Emperor of another dimension while he was away. Nonetheless, we all learned a bizarre lesson that day. ... Crazy stuff.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Grant!

Jesse Sosa

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Jesse Sosa has worked at Mumbo Jumbo, Terminal Reality and Dinosaur Games on such lost games as Demonik (Xbox 360, PS3), Sundown (Xbox 360, PS3), Fear & Respect (PS2) True Crime 3 (Xbox 360, PS3) and many more lost pitches.

Luca: To begin with the interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your past experiences in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.
Jesse: My name is Jesse Sosa. I'm currently Creative Owner for my own small game studio called Dinosaur Games in Austin, TX. We are currently developing VR experiences for our clients while developing our internal game, MechKnight Chronicles, on our spare time. I started in the industry back in 2001 with a studio in Dallas called Mumbo Jumbo. I then moved over to Terminal Reality where I spent the next 9 years. Oddly enough, Dinosaur's first game is an Unseen Terminal Reality game that was saved from the black hole. It's called GL00 and should be out this summer.

Luca: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?
Jesse: My top 3 videogames currently are Super Mario World, Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past, and the whole Half-Life experience. Recently I've been very selective of the games I put time into because time is rare when you run your own studio. I always make time for the Batman games. I just finished the amazing Life is Strange. Doom 2016 is now my next target.

Luca: What do you remember about your time at Terminal Reality? Since early 2000 the studio had their successful BloodRayne IP, they started to collaborate with such celebrities as John Woo, Guillermo del Toro and Clive Barker, plus they were also able to work on popular franchises (Æon Flux, Spy Hunter, a few SNK collections), so it seemed like a great place to work in.
Jesse: I worked on almost every ip we had in house from June 2002 - June 2011. The studio quickly became my family. It was my second studio but for many on the team, it was their first. We bonded over BloodRayne 2 and will always have that experience together. I loved the studio, but decided to leave when I saw the industry trends going one way and Terminal Reality going another.

Luca: Portable BloodRayne projects for PSP and 3DS were also in development at some point, but never released. Were Terminal Reality working on those or did Majesco give the IP to another studio as it happened with BloodRayne: Betrayal? Do you remember anything about these two lost games, their gameplay, story details or why they never seen the light of day?
Jesse: I remember casually pitching a PSP BloodRayne game idea when Majesco was in studio one day. The story revolved around Ferril tracking down her lost son and fighting werewolves. It was just a casual pitch and I'm not sure beyond that how serious the BloodRayne ip was being looked at for PSP. We did work on several PSP demos, including a Star Wars one where you played as a Twi'lek running around on the Death Star.

Luca: A legendary lost game in development at Terminal Reality was Demonik, a project hyped for its use of a new version of the Infernal Engine and high profile collaborations with John Woo's Tiger Hill Entertainment, horror author Clive Barker and Marvel artist David Finch. Demonik was also featured in "Grandma's Boy", a movie with lots of references to Terminal Reality: do you remember anything about the game, the collaboration with such high-profile names and the making of the movie? Funnily enough, Demonik is successfully released in the movie, on the contrary in "our reality" Majesco canned the project for some reasons.
Jesse: Demonik was a fun project to be part of. From what I can remember, Majesco was going through some internal changes (They went public I believe) and the budget of the game was cut,

so the game was cancelled. I was able to work alongside David Finch when he was in the studio. He was a drawing machine. He is a very genuine person and very humble. He put in his all to deliver the best product possible. Unfortunately, there was a lot of drama between Clive Barker, Tiger Hill, and our VP. Things got very heated and I remember Clive Barker threatening to pull out of the project. The specifics escape me now, but that game had a very messy development cycle. In the end, it was probably best that it was cancelled. There were too many egos involved in the decision making and none were willing to back down. Grandma's Boy actually consisted of two projects; Demonik and Eternal Death Slayer. (The game in Grandma's Boy) There was a time where Majesco was trying to get a game with Adam Sandler's production company (A whole other lost game and story), and Grandma's Boy was a 'scratch our back, we'll scratch yours' type of deal. During development of Aeon Flux, the VP of Terminal Reality came to me and a couple others and asked if we could create a fighting game for the movie. We agreed and created Eternal Death Slayer in 3 weeks. In the end, Happy Madison decided not to pursue making a video game and Majesco cancelled Demonik. Seeing my work on the big screen was reward enough. Funny enough, Aeon Flux and Grandma's Boy came out within a month from each other. When the studio took us to see Aeon Flux, the Eternal Death Slayer team went to see Grandma's Boy instead. We made the right decision.

Luca: Sundown was the game that Terminal Reality were working on with Guillermo del Toro, but unfortunately it was quietly cancelled According to del Toro, the game would have been similar to Left 4 Dead: do you remember any details about the gameplay, its story and settings, how much was done before the cancellation and why it was never completed?

Jesse: I spoke on Sundown here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO-cvG1JjQk&feature=youtu.be

Luca: As games like Call of Duty were really popular in 2005 / 2006, Terminal Reality created a prototype demo for a military FPS set in Iraq, to pitch it to various publishers. Do you remember anything about this military FPS demo?

Jesse: When asked to work on the FPS demo, I declined and focused my time on our PSP demos, Next Gen Infernal Engine tech, our Metal Slug 3D demo, and our Indiana Jones demo. The demo the FPS team made was awesome though. It had the Player walking down the streets of Iraq with a convoy. The convoy gets attacked with a rocket launcher and the rest of the demo was a fight amidst chaos. The higher ups at Terminal Reality really wanted to secure an FPS game, which unfortunately didn't happen until Walking Dead. The purpose of the FPS demo was just that, a demo to secure a project. It was never intended to be released.

Luca: At DICE 2009 Terminal Reality shown a tech demo for their new Infernal Engine featuring "The Stranger" (the protagonist of their cult survival horror Nocturne) and rumors started to spread about a Nocturne sequel in development at the studio. Any truth about this?

Jesse: The Infernal team needed a demo to show the new features of the engine. When the meeting happened over what resources we had and what we could realistically create in the time available, we chose to use an ip that Terminal Reality owned. Nocturne was chosen by the artists. There really was nothing more to it other than that. After the demo was created, it got people

excited internally. The project didn't go forward because we were focused on Def Jam Rapstar and Star Wars: Kinect.

Luca: Do you remember any other cancelled game, pitch concept or early prototype in development at Terminal Reality? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Jesse: Oh man. Where to begin? There were too many. In chronological order according to my memory:

- The Hulk demo made out of a modified BloodRayne / Noctourne engine
- The Bloodlust demo that became BloodRayne
- A game called Re-Mission that was taken from us, finished elsewhere, and then released years later.
- Rayne driving a motorcycle demo because 'Tomb Raider is doing it'.
- The game Highway Hunter that became the game RoadKill.
- The true history behind the game Blowout.
- The Snoop Dog / Grand Theft Auto style game pitch where you play as Snoop and other rappers on the No Limit Records label.

- The Happy Madison game pitch where you play as Adam Sandler in college and interact with his friends on campus
- Metal Slug 3D demo
- Indiana Jones demo
- The cancelled BloodRayne 2 Epilogue (comic book) that was setting up BloodRayne 3. kankerzero.deviantart.com/art/BloodRayne-2-Epilogue-297328059
- The Star Wars demo with the Twi'lek that was not accepted yet made us raise our eyebrows when Star Wars Lethal Alliance was released.
- The Universal Monsters pitch where you played the roll of a human caught between a war between factions of the famous Movie Monsters.
- Sundown
- The Golem pitch in which you created Golems and fought other Golems.
- The Archangel pitch where you play a man possessed by the Archangel Michael.
- The Cellar Dwellers pitch for Tim Burton's (I believe) studio where you play the role of 3 twisted children that have to solve puzzles.
- We were given True Crime 3 to make a demo for but dropped it when we shifted focus to Ghostbusters

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories back from your time at Terminal Reality?

Jesse: I'll always remember crunch time on BloodRayne 2 for both. We were all young and bonded over the long hours we spent together. There were times where the team would go to Wal-Mart and buy steaks and BBQ in our parking lot at 2am. The BloodRayne 2 crunch is also what caused me to herniate 2 of the disks in my spine which have affected my life ever since.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Jesse!

John Andersen

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

John Andersen is a video game historian - researching how the video games we love to play got made. During his career John has provided an array of product consulting services to video game developers including: Mitchell Corporation, G-Mode, and Coolnet Entertainment. He has also provided anti-piracy assistance to a number of different game publishers. John has contributed to Gamasutra, TeamXbox, Gamespot, Retro Gamer Magazine, Serious Game Source and many others. An avid fan of the indie arts, he indulges himself in animation from Russia, alternative comedy, bad movies, and musicians that deserve more recognition.
twitter.com/johnandersen21

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about you, your experience as a gaming journalist / historian and what you are researching about lately.

John: I started writing on the side while I lived in Japan teaching English from 2003-2005, visiting Tokyo Game Shows and occasionally smaller developers in Tokyo when time allowed. It was in Japan that I started watching Game Center CX on TV, observing the classic gaming scene, but also visited the Level X exhibition at the Tokyo Museum of Photography. Japan truly appreciates its gaming legacy, but it was at the Level X exhibition I watched video of the last Nintendo Famicom rolling off the Nintendo assembly line. Around that time I was interested in Hong Kong movies, and once visited Hong Kong to see they had an actual museum and archive dedicated to movies. I then thought, why doesn't Japan have a museum dedicated to gaming? I tried my best to gather interest in a museum with a couple Japanese organizations, complete with a business plan draft, but no one wanted to take a meeting with me to discuss it further. From there, I began hearing stories of lost source code in the gaming media and began to research different aspects of video game history and discovered much more was being lost. I moderated one panel at PAX East on the subject and the following year was asked to be a guest on another game history panel with the American Classic Arcade Museum. Since then I've published three major features on game preservation "Where Games Go To Sleep" and "Selecting Save On The Games We Make" for Gamasutra, and also "The Demolition of Japan's Videogame History" for Kill Screen. I also have a Twitter feed @JohnAndersen21 where I post random finds from archives, databases, etc. I'm working on a big project right now, it's been in the making for several years that I plan on revealing soon involving game designers I've gotten in contact with. It's going to be something that I hope will be informative as well as groundbreaking. I hope to make an announcement very soon.

Luca: Which are some of your favorite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

John: I'm a big survival horror fan, I really enjoy the Resident Evil, Fatal Frame and Dead Space series. When it comes to arcade games my favorites are the classics from Data East (Burgertime, Lock 'N Chase to Bump 'N Jump"), Sega (Crazy Taxi), and Taito Corp (Elevator Action, Bust-A-Move) along with Atari Games (Marble Madness, Gauntlet, and Paperboy). There are two other games that have a special place in my life, they are Illbleed and Blue Stinger for the Sega Dreamcast, created by Shinya Nishigaki, a game designer in Japan I met and interviewed in Tokyo two months

before his untimely passing. I could go on and on about my favorite games and also the backlog in front of me.

Luca: You wrote many articles about the importance of preserving the history of videogames trough developers' source codes, artifacts, documents and even the buildings in which our favorite games were made. How is the current situation of videogame preservation? Are progress being made to save important pieces of history or there are still too many memories that risk to be lost every day?

John: I feel that the majority of current generation of game developers and publishers have started to take game preservation seriously, but there still is a long way to go and production elements are always vulnerable to being lost, destroyed, or tossed in the trash. Developers and publishers see the value of their legacy when art museums hold exhibits on their work. When Disney calls up a game developer and asks to use their character in a multi-million dollar production like Wreck-It Ralph, then that gets peoples attention. I'm happy with how our culture is keeping gaming alive. However, the game preservation realm has major uphill challenges. I'm very worried about gaming property from developers and publishers that have gone bankrupt or have changed ownership in the past. Production material can be lost, or even be kept by those that have forgotten about it or see no value in it. Then there is the issue of not knowing who actually made the arcade and console game we play because there were no staff credits attached to them. That being said, we have a great organizations like the ICHEG at the Strong Museum in New York, American Classic Arcade Museum in New Hampshire, the National Videogame Museum in Texas, Nexon Computer Museum in South Korea, Computerspielemuseum in Germany, Game Preservation Society in Japan. On top of this there is GDRI (Game Developer Research Institute), the IGDA game preservation group, plus the countless people in our online community that could fill this whole book, and of course Unseen 64! I'm thankful for the people I've met at PAX East and for those that I keep in contact with via social media. I simply don't want game developers and publishers seeing their work as "short-term entertainment", it should always be something that a player can return to, and something that can be shared with future generations of game players. I feel that if a game developer or publisher wants to be taken seriously, then they have to present the work that went into the game seriously, either before, during or after production in some form. That can be a challenge when a game developer or publisher has to finish production on the game and of course sell it. In other words, the biggest obstacle is understandably time, money and resources to accomplish all of this.

Luca: Most people probably are not aware about the importance of taking care of buildings in which videogames were made: what kind of historical artifacts are / were stored in those buildings and why companies could lose them when they close down or move to a new place? Do you have any example of something important that was lost or thrown away in such occasions?

John: One such story was the famous Atari office clean-out. It's an insane story I re-told from various sources that can be found in "Where Games Go To Sleep". In short, Atari was selling furniture from its Sunnyvale offices that included filing cabinets, this occurred in the mid-1980's after corporate restructuring and layoffs. Inside these filing cabinets were Atari documents ranging from design diagrams, source code, artwork, marketing tie-in materials, to box and instruction manual proofs. As the story goes, some of the source code was returned to Atari, but much of the filing cabinets filled with documents was sold off. One gentleman named Cort Allen bought forty-four remaining filing cabinets, while his friend bought four filing cabinets. Allen would donate the contents of his filing cabinets to the ICHEG just last year, while his friend threw

away the contents of his filing cabinets many years prior. There were contents thrown out at Atari, but we don't know exactly what was thrown out. Think of every other game developer and publisher office move or closure from the United States, Japan to Europe and imagine just what else has been thrown out in a trash landfill. That's what we've lost. There are other examples in Where Games Go to Sleep and Selecting Save on the Games We Make.

Luca: How do you approach your investigations, where do you search for old photos and info about long-forgotten studios and how do you share and preserve what you found? Do you have an archive for all the findings you made through the years?

John: It all starts from old flyers and advertisements, from there I search media and interview archives, and if I need to find people I search social media. I use the Wayback Machine to find any potential websites if the company existed during that period. I rely on databases like Moby Games to view the games they've created. I start from the outside to inside, which is why you see so many pictures of video game offices on my Twitter feed! I want to paint a picture for the viewer of where these game offices existed and where designers, programmers, artists, musicians and everyone worked. I basically organize everything in folders and have an automatic back-up to an external hard drive that runs every evening, this includes interviews, photos, drafts and finished features. What I find and what I share on Twitter is also backed-up of course, from my tweets to my photos, I make sure to download my Twitter archive which is very convenient. It's a resource for me because if I want to refer back to a piece of research that I've uncovered then I simply search my Twitter archive. Some of the "physical" that I have found are things that I'll be donating to a museum which I have not decided on yet. I am also planning on building a website soon in association with my current project where I plan on sharing much more of my new research and will transfer my old research there.

Luca: During your researches you got in contact with many gaming studios in America, Europe and Japan, to find out how they manage preservation of their historical heritage. What did you learn, are companies aware of the importance of saving such kind of documents? Is it difficult to get answers from them? Are there different views on the matter between Japanese, American and European studios?

John: Many developers and publishers care about their legacies, but the feeling I got from indie developers was "We have to worry about right now, not the past". I think that echoes to major developers and publishers as well since this is understandably (and obviously) such a competitive industry. Still, many developers and publishers do a disservice to themselves by not even providing a chronology of their legacy and of the games they've released on their corporate websites. Why hide your catalogue of games, corporate achievements and overall legacy? That's also a disservice to their business development because why hide what you've made from other potential partners that may want to license that property for a new game project or even a piece of merchandise? In all honesty, I was disappointed when I got standard statements that did not go into detail about their backup and preservation procedures. One developer admitted to me "Well, we've passed your questions around the office, we don't know how to respond, but we'll make sure to have our PR person get back to you". Even afterwards, after everything was published, I continued to research. I sent an email to a French arcade game developer and got no response. I even sent them a letter via air mail – but got no response. Frustrating. It's my hope that what I've written and had published captured the attention of developers and publishers. One small developer contacted me after he sent me answers to my interview questions. He basically told me that my questions about game preservation made him go out and buy a second backup hard drive!

Luca: Sometimes even when companies take care of their development files, something unexpected could strike: a tragic yet interesting story you wrote about in your "Where Games Go To Sleep" article on Gamasutra is about the Great Hanshin Earthquake that struck the city of Kobe in 1995, destroying one of Konami's buildings in which Metal Gear Solid (along with other titles) was being made. Kojima and his team lost a ton of data and had to restart development. Are you aware of any other similar natural disaster that destroyed a gaming studio's building?

John: I have not, but I do wonder if there have been "data disasters" from crashed hard drives or other events that are not reported, I imagine there are many untold stories out there of items lost from individual game designers, programmers and other production staff. I have heard second-hand stories of production materials being destroyed by residential house fires – basically materials that were in the personal possession of game production staff that were destroyed, but I haven't been able to verify this. The thing is, just imagine of what we haven't heard due to company confidentiality or executives not wanting to disclose such events in corporate reports to company shareholders or potential investors. There is the mentality of, "Well, we still have the finished game, we'll just rebuild it". Still, that rebuilt game, which you had to sink more money into, is not going to be the same. Game developers and publishers need staff on-hand or at least consultants that can prepare them for disaster prevention from all elements – to prevent everything from a rainstorm flooded archive or server room to pointing fire hazards in any working environment.

Luca: How could gaming companies secure their data effectively? A curious example you wrote about is underground storage in a salt mine, but that probably is something that only big studios can afford.

John: That's true. Regardless, logging, archiving and storage should be a part of the game production process, call it a "business continuity and disaster recovery plan" for any game developer and/or publisher, it's the same term Microsoft uses. Scanning in paper documents and artwork apart of development, and backing up every other piece of data (multiple back-ups) at reliable off-site storage facilities is crucial. Keep a log sheet of all material. Make sure those off-site storage facilities for the physical material and data are away from potential ground/basement floodwaters, extreme sunlight, mold, other elements and hazards, etc. Have adequate alarms and extinguishing systems for smoke and/or fire. Have a back-up location in case of an emergency when things need to be relocated after an emergency. Mark any physical material as "company property", "Do not erase", "Do not remove from office", "confidential" to show its importance. Attach a person to that property, from the "Director of Operations" to another long-standing development or publishing executive that understands the importance of that material and can delegate another company associate to keep archiving that material on a regular basis.

Luca: Do individual developers have some kind of "duty" to archive documents from the games they worked on and should they share those files to the public after a certain number of years? How to find a good balance between Non-Disclosure Agreements and historical preservation?

John: I feel that they have a responsibility to archive the documents they've worked on, and sharing them also. However, sharing source code is obviously something they're not going to do unless they really want to, usually an individual with the copyright of a game will do that instead of corporation. Some developers are doing great work in sharing artwork and telling the story of what went into the production of a game. "The Last of Us" YouTube documentary and art book is

a good example of that. That came out the same time as the game. The industry needs more of that. I feel that more game developers and publishers should add on documents (artwork, behind-the-scenes interviews, and marketing material) as bonus content along with the games. There is an added cost to that, that work takes time (along with the actual production of the game) but it's great social media publicity for the release, it's great for sales and everyone wins.

Luca: Is there any info, photo or document that you would like to archive, but that you did not find yet or that is already long lost and cannot be preserved anymore?
John: I'm searching for many early video arcade games from Japan, in particular, some of Sega's early arcade games, one called Heavyweight Champ from 1976, and many historians identify it to be the first video game to have hand-to-hand fighting between two players. I have not found an actual working cabinet in my internet research, it's my hope that a working cabinet exists. There is also Universal (the Japanese arcade developers of Mr. Do and LadyBug), they produced pinball machines after the company started, and I've never seen one in the hands a collector. It's the same situation as Heavyweight Champ: I don't know if any still exist. One of the Universal pinball machines actually had a video monitor at the top-front which kept score. I imagine that piece is very rare if it even still exists at all. I'm crushed that back issues of Play Meter Magazine were destroyed at the company offices in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. Play Meter is an arcade game industry magazine that was founded in 1974, so think of all the history lost there that were contained within the pages

Luca: Researching the history of videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every historian has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience?
John: I have a couple stories actually, and I'd rather not name names. While researching "Selecting Save on the Games We Make" I sent one indie studio a series of questions. They sent back photos of an intern dressed up as an astronaut (they did a green screen effect) where he was floating out in space and examining a crate of old computers and consoles. Basically, the photo (along with one of their answers) involved sending game consoles and computers to outer space in a crate in the event of a disaster on Earth. Their answers to game preservation involved cryogenically freezing themselves to play their games in the future, with their other off-site storage solution being a shoebox of DVD's buried in a secret location. I thought it was amusing and funny, but I couldn't use any of it! I was writing a serious feature and had I put that in then the tone of the piece would have been out the window. The thing is I didn't immediately respond to them because I just happened to be on vacation when they sent that email to me, and they must have panicked, they emailed me back all apologetic hoping they didn't offend me or damage their relationship with Gamasutra. Everything was fine of course, but it was all very bizarre since I wanted the questions to be taken seriously, because that particular indie developer just happened to have a very close relationship with a console manufacturer. In the end, despite going through all the work to make their answers an elaborate joke, they ended up not having time to give any real answers I could use for the piece. They admitted to me they had no special system in place for archiving, which was why they replied with jokes. The other bizarre thing that happened to me in researching "Saving The Video Game" was that I had a game designer reply to my questions, and he attached actual computer game source code to one of his emails basically saying "Here, you make sense of this". The thing is I could have found someone to make sense of it if I really needed to, there are programming language experts and veterans out there that are brought on to projects (look at staff credits of various published game compilations for Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo game platforms, you'll find production staff knowledgeable in emulating Z80, M68K, 6809, etc.). He really didn't find value in preserving source code from many years ago, even though I had these same emulator programmers telling me that game source code was helpful in working out issues in emulation, debugging and obviously essential in porting games to other platforms for retail and digital release.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time John!

Ken Capelli

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Ken Capelli has worked at Accolade, Planet Moon Studios, Crystal Dynamics and Kabam on such lost games as Zero Tolerance 2, MindFuck (PC/ Playstation) – a prototype that became Slave Zero (Dreamcast, PC), Deus Ex: Clan Wars - the game that was later changed into Project: Snowblind (PS2, Xbox, PC), Infected 2 (PSP), My Amazing Story (Xbox 360) and many more lost prototypes.

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Ken: I'm Ken Capelli, game Art Director. I got my start in the early 90's at the tail end of Genesis/ SNES days and have been fortunate to get to work on many console platforms in the generations since then (32x, Dreamcast, PS2, XBOX, XBOX 360, Wii, PC, a few I probably forgot) plus handhelds (PSP, DS) and, more recently, facebook and mobile. My degree is in classical figurative illustration and I was aiming to be a comic book artist or book illustrator... though I played a lot of games in my teens game art was pretty low-fi and pixely (think: coin-op and C-64) and wasn't apparent as a career destination... but by the time I graduated VGA and CD-ROMs were the thing and there was suddenly a lot more pixels to fill with art, and the game companies in the bay area started needing trained kids from the art schools. I grew up programming computers and playing games so I had a leg up on many other artists at the time who never used a computer before. Back then, there was no route into a career in games no game art, design, or programming curricula, no job sites, nothing... everyone I worked with in those days was there by accident, on their way to something else, so we had really interesting, diverse groups of people. Our engineers were guys from Lockheed or HP (real, old school Silicon Valley engineers), artists were flightly amateurs, designers were dudes from QA who played more games better than anyone, producers were squares with MBAs. There weren't any best practices (we didn't even know the term), we just made it up as we went. It was pretty thrilling if you were cool with making your own structure but we crunched a lot because every schedule and feature promise was made on pure guesswork. It really was the wild west, old school Silicon Valley. There was very little specialization, most artists were generalists. Teams had only two or three artists, so you did a bit of everything from concept sketches to pixel animation to backgrounds, to UI. I was happy doing it all, and when I worked with someone who was, say, really into animation but not so much into UI I'd let them do more of that and I'd do more of the other stuff, and I took on organizing, which no one wanted to do... naming conventions, files, style guides, etc. I was versatile and became a lead artist pretty quickly. I learned 3D when a producer dropped a big box of "3D Studio Release 4" onto my desk and mumbled "Upper management tells me 3D is the next thing, so... I bought this. I guess there's a manual in the box?" I pulled out the stack of floppies and started installing it. It was cool, we got to work with the best computers, learning the newest software, to make things that hadn't been made before. Over the course of my career I've been a concept artist, illustrator, pixel artist, sprite animator, 3d animator, character modeler, FX artist, environment artist, level designer, UI artist, rigger/ skinner, tech artist, UX designer, and an art & creative director. The one odd thing about my career is that I haven't tended to move around a lot. I was at my first company (Accolade) for 6 years, second for 10, and current company for 5. I tend to dig in with teams rather than hop around every couple of years, and I've done it all from my home base in San Francisco. After 6 years at Accolade, starting off with production art on sports games and then leading an original strategy game (Deadlock) and early 3D action game (Slave Zero), I landed at Planet Moon Studios, where I spent the next decade making a lot of quirky, innovative titles and rising to the role of Art Director. Almost every game we at PM did was different from the previous... totally varied art styles and genres (3rd person action, zombies, jet fighters, fantasy, platformers, trivia + board games, rhythm action, dancing, etc). I had a lot of fun and my portfolio is pretty weird. After Planet Moon closed up I took a role at Kabam, first as the studio Art Director overseeing the San Francisco studio's fantasy and sci-fi web games, then as a Creative Director in the Publishing division offering content, UX, and branding guidance to our 3rd party developers (primarily Chinese and Korean but also one English and one American studio) before moving

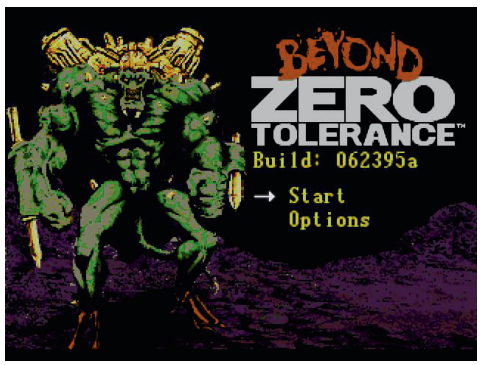
back to hands-on game development, where I now art direct Kabam's RPGs in San Francisco. As an Art Director I'm mostly hands-off with the actual art anymore, and focus mostly on setting art style plus maintaining quality, so it's a lot of paintovers, style guide creation, and talking. I work with a lot of very talented specialists, so I get out of the way and let them do their jobs ?

Luca: Which are some of your favorite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Ken: My favorite game ever is the original X-COM: UFO Defense. I install it every few years and play through a time or two. I'm a fan of the new ones as well. A close second is the Mass Effect series... it's like the "Best Of" science fiction! I almost exclusively play RPGs and adventure titles, and I can't say I'm unhappy that a lot of action games (Assassin's Creed, Dishonored, even old ones like TIE Fighter) have adopted RPG features and mechanics, with an emphasis on progression and story. I think the key draw is, for me, being dropped into a new place that I get to discover, explore, and (hopefully) come to care about. Witcher 3 was the best thing I've played in a long time... a really lovingly crafted experience. I got sucked into Dragon Age: Inquisition, Fallout 3 & 4, Skyrim, Fable 1-3, all the Assassin's Creeds. Life is Strange was just wonderful, and The Stanley Parable and Gone Home are memorable faves as well. I'm still chewing on The Serpent in the Staglands RPG, as well as Darkest Dungeon. In the MMO realm The Secret World is my jam... very original and offbeat premise in that one. In the non-RPG realm I love all the Telltale games and anything that comes out of Double Fine. My girlfriend and I play a lot Minecraft, and I get into The Division and Destiny with buddies. I've unfortunately raised my daughter (now 16) to have a deep love of RPGs, so now I have competition for time on the console! To be honest I don't have many favorite mobile games... the ones I would love just haven't been made for me yet, though Sworcery sticks out as a very strong vision, the Walking Dead XCOM-like tactical game is quite smooth, and Knights of Pen & Paper scratches my retro RPG itch. From an art standpoint Monument Valley and Lara Croft Go were pretty great polished experiences.

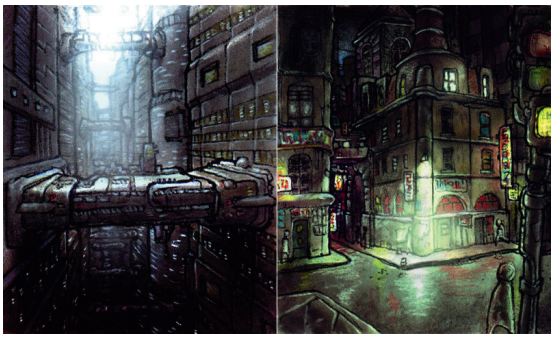
Luca: In 1994 Accolade released Zero Tolerance on the Genesis, the first FPS on home consoles and now a cult classic. Technopop was also working on a sequel titled Beyond Zero Tolerance, that unfortunately was never completed. Do you remember anything about this lost game? Was it requested by Accolade? Why was it cancelled?

Ken: Zero Tolerance was the first thing I ever worked on. The developer was external, I was part of the internal art team that created supporting artwork... the fullscreen end-of-level illustrations and avatar portraits. I think I did what was the final victory piece of the soldier with a foot on the dead alien boss. I don't recall much about the sequel. I think the original just didn't sell well enough to warrant continuing with it. Back then it took a while to get the sell-through numbers back to analyze, so it wasn't uncommon for a team to start on the next thing right away (why lose time) while waiting for sales numbers to come back in. Also, Accolade was in the midst of a lawsuit with Sega over cartridge copy-protection, so it's also possible that Accolade just didn't want to ship anything else on the Genesis, which as a platform was waning by then. By the time ZT2 was discontinued I was working on Deadlock, though, and outside the ZT2 loop.

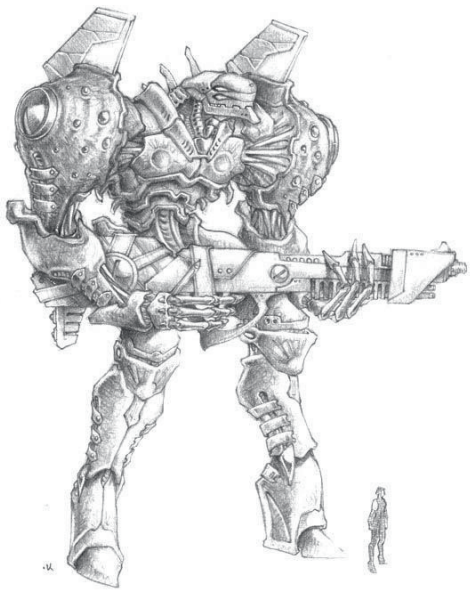


Luca: In 1997 you worked as lead artist for MindFuck, a prototype for Playstation and PC that was then released in 1999 as Slave Zero for Dreamcast and PC. Can you tell us how the project was conceived, how it evolved and what was changed / cut in the final game? Were you inspired by classic cartoons with mechs as Patlabor and Evangelion?

Ken: MF was conceived by producer Matt Powers as a high-octane action shooter, straight-up cyberpunk, rated M. The main character was a female bounty hunter named Clash, who wore spikes and latex. This was well before the Matrix surfaced that look into the mainstream (we were both pulling from similar club/ fetish inspiration) but we were more Heavy Metal/ Fifth Element/ European graphic novel leaning. We had a running prototype of Clash in a section of city fighting some gang punks, and a lot of lore written for the world. Our goal was to recreate the feel of the



first action scene in Blade Runner... a gunfight in a crowd of people, full sensory overload. The technical challenge was how to populate a city like that? Way ambitious for what the 3D cards could actually deliver, but we were looking into voxel engines and other techniques that could deliver the density of experience we envisioned. We used middleware that would drop polygons as needed to maintain framerate. I think Shiny's Messiah was pursuing those kinds of techniques as well. As we started to do population tests the bone and poly count on NPCs kept dropping and dropping for the number of individuals we wanted onscreen, until what we had was these 10-segment mannequins, with each bone as one textured triangle. Without alpha. They looked terrible... unless you were far away from them, when they were small onscreen... they were believable small. You see where this is going. Our design lead, Sean Vesce, hesitantly pitched pivoting into a giant robot game to solve the scale issue. The team was fully into it. Now, Sean had been a lead on Mechwarrior 3 so when he envisioned "giant robot" it was this slow, lumbering mech, which is against the original high-octane action intent. Neither Sean nor many outside the team (execs, squares) could envision something fast *and* big and insisted we alter the design for a slower game. I'd been a longtime anime fan and grew up on Gundam and Patlabor, so I put together a reel of the best urban combats from those series plus some Evangelion fights. As soon as they saw it in motion, they got it. The Evangelion stuff horrified the squares, though, but I knew that darker direction would work for the fanbase. Things that got cut/ lost: the original design for Slave Zero (a blend of concepts that artist Chin-han Hsu, Ted Naifeh, and I created) was creepier and there was an original subtext that that would play up the sacrifice aspect... the hero ("Chang?") permanently merging with this monstrous machine, losing his humanity forever. The menu screen captures the only moment we see him as a human being, this little silhouette contemplating the giant SZ prototype in its vat, before merging with it. Accolade's president couldn't get behind a monster as a protagonist (it was pretty creepy, Giger-esque), so we redesigned Slave Zero to be more masculine and heroic looking. We kept a dumbed-down version of the original Slave Zero as the mass-produced Slave units in the final levels of the game. That design was my baby, I wanted more for it. The story subtext was lost as we cut cutscenes to make the schedule, leaving behind mostly just the level progression, intro/ outro and boss introductions to deliver plot. Ted (an accomplished comic book writer/ artist) have bandied around the idea of resurrecting the design and core idea



and doing it *right* as a graphic novel but we haven't put our heads together on it in any real way.

Luca: Do you remember any cancelled game that was in development at Accolade before the purchase of the company by Infogrames? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Ken: That's a fuzzy period. We didn't have much in development... by the time of the Infogrames purchase Accolade had pivoted to a "fewer, bigger, better" strategy with bigger investment behind fewer titles. The only game I recall being cancelled around then was a Star Control offshoot called "StarCon", developed by the team right next to us. It was an action spaceship shooter. Looked nice, but the codebase and development was troubled, and it was cancelled. I don't remember any other games of note from around that time. Honestly, Infogrames was interested in Accolade for just two things: the North American distribution network we had, and the exclusive Hummer license (which pushed Test Drive: Offroad to the stratospheric success it didn't deserve). I think Slave Zero was published just because it was done and ready to go. It was aimed at core gamers, whereas Infogrames' portfolio was more mass-audience.We ported it/ published it on Dreamcast in what turned out to be, in hindsight, a move to clear up the lingering liabilities from the Sega lawsuits (Accolade owed Sega a ton of money which it still hadn't paid) to make the Infogrames purchase financially feasible. One less red mark on the books to deal with.

Luca: You worked for about 10 years at Planet Moon Studios, a talented team that developed such cult-classics as Giants: Citizen Kabuto and Armed and Dangerous as their first two released projects. Both titles were acclaimed by gamers and the press at the time, but it seems that they did not sell as much as they deserved. What did the team feel at the time? Were sales enough to justify all the effort and creativity put in such great projects? It seems that after a while Planet Moon stop working on original games and to survive they had to develop tie-in games and casual titles, before to close down in 2011.

Ken: Ah, Planet Moon was family. We were disappointed that the sales weren't better, but the effort and creativity were rewards themselves. We were firing pretty well on the creativity front, but as a small studio (10 people) the best quality we could get what we both ironically and earnestly referred to as "handmade, lovingly crafted", instead of "polished". We made up for polish with charm. However, the software on Giants and AnD was buggy, which didn't help. In the case of Giants, though, Interplay was tight on cash at the time so we didn't have the support to capitalize on all the critical awards with an "Editor's Choice" version or marketing. We had acclaim from fellow developers and core fans but mainstream success was elusive. A big part of it was that we couldn't help ourselves but to be weird and funny, and often ended up with the "quirky" label, is like sales kryptonite. Around 2004 the PSP seemed like the perfect fit for Planet Moon... not only a super sexy device and mobile platform that we could innovate on, but we could also avoid the scale trap that console development was becoming at the time (100+ person teams to meet the scope/ fidelity expectations on XBOX 360 and PS3) and keep developing/ innovating with a sensibly sized ~16 person team. After INFECTED (the first time we got branding right... "INFECT THE WORLD") we focused more on providing innovative gameplay, polish, and execution for existing IP, rather than our own quirky wrappers. We revived Sega's Afterburner, were pretty deep into a Conan game (to tie in with the then-planned Robert Rodriquez film), delivered a solid Wii-centric sequel to Drawn-To-Life and Disney's Tangled for Wii and DS (the DS version done in the style of Mary Blair/ Sleeping Beauty), a DS version of the Brainquest cards, and were in development with Beyoncé on a dance game for the Kinect. Mixed in there we did do some original titles... Battle of the Bands (internal working title: "Mr. Hong's Violent Orchestra"), Smarty Pants, Booty Blocks on the iPhone, and the cancelled My Amazing Story. The thing is, it wasn't like

an emotionally debilitating decline from being this troupe of auteurs into doing IP and casual games. A lot of us were older and had children, and it was rewarding making games our kids could enjoy with us. Along the way there were a lot of good design and technical challenges that were fun to chew on (like Rapunzel's hair!), and we developed a rep as a house that delivers really neat gameplay with pretty artwork, reliably and on schedule. There was still a desire to forge our own destiny instead of continuing with the work-for-hire path we'd been on. The Beyoncé title was going to be our last IP project … it was a big big bite that would set us up to pursue a following strategy for smaller, innovative games again. We were making fantastic progress when that whole thing came to a sudden, unexpected end. Alas.

Luca: Armed and Dangerous had some of the crazier and most original weapons ever: the "Land Shark Gun", the "Topsy Turvy Bomb" or the "world's smallest black hole" are still remembered and loved by those who played the game. How were such eccentric weapons conceived? Were there any other over-the-top weapons that were conceptualized, but then cut from the final game?

Ken: Those things came from pure folly. The "Topsy Turvy Bomb" was conceptualized out of a bug that Tim Williams experienced while playing around with design values in the game. He either accidentally flipped the camera upside down and ran around like that or flipped the camera AND world geo and fell off… either way, thinking "wouldn't it be funny if everything fell off the world but I held on…" The "Land Shark Gun" was actually named by the players or press. Bob Stevenson had designed a bunch of goofy weapons… one that looked like a tuba, one that looked like a shark with a missile that had a fin, one that was a boxing glove… I modeled them all. We released a screenshot of the protagonist, Roman, holding that ridiculous shark rifle (there was no gameplay on it at that point, it was just a model) and someone referred to it as "the land shark gun" in a caption or comment. Bob and Nick Bruty really liked that label, and the design followed. The "World's Smallest Black Hole" was a reference to the "World's Smallest Nuclear Bomb" from MDK. Nick knew what he wanted for the effect, and for the actual bomb he just wanted a box that would be thrown, bounce, then open, releasing the black hole. I decided to make it a shitty, beat-up cardboard box, like, the least awesome thing to hold a freaking black hole. Bob had a design theory that if you can get a laugh out of someone, you've got them on your side. So if we could get a good laugh out of an idea, we knew there was something there. That's true for just about any other positive emotional response. Charm is charming. Also, we drank a lot. A lot.

Luca: Other than the Xbox port of Giants: Citizen Kabuto, Conan for PSP and BEYONCÉ: Star Power do you remember any other cancelled game in development at Planet Moon Studios during those years? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Ken: Wow, you guys have done your homework. We did a LOT of pitches and internal prototypes. We had a hip-hop-flavored destructible environment game in prototype after INFECTED. The idea was that you would be these bees that would cause ever-escalating catastrophes from small butterfly-effect-like actions, and the whole world would bounce along to the soundtrack. We had a really quickly hacked Cylon flying shooter that we put together to try for the Battlestar Galactica license. That flying engine became Afterburner: Black Falcon. "Octokid", a pitch for a puzzle game about a cephalopod-headed kid who could fit into small spaces and reach/ snap things with his tentacles. Super-cute looking. "Yes, Master" a Tim-Burton-eqsue side-scroller game where you played Igor and had to keep the castle in order for various masters, corralling loose monsters and killing/ saving guests. It would have probably been similar to what Double Fine did with "The Cave" but with more twitch and destruction. One that was just concept art about guiding a somnambulist through his house and other dangerous areas safely. A bi-plan dueling game, like where you are rapier-dueling someone while on a bi-planes wings. Handlebar moustaches. I'm

sure that one had more to it, but Trevor Grimshaw just made art for that one image. A Wii game about schoolyard bullies. We were working on a guitar-teaching game with actual guitars... there was a prototype about pasta. We had done some work on INFECTED2. There's probably others I'm forgetting or that never made it to pitch/ prototype or died on napkins.

Luca: It seems that you also worked for some months at Crystal Dynamics as Senior Artist for Project: Snowblind, what do you remember about the changes made to the project, to transform Deus Ex: Clan Wars into this new IP? How much had to be cut to create the new game?
Ken: Not that much changed, we just swapped the wrapper and protagonist. Over the course of the year I was on the project at Crystal (during a Planet Moon "funding break") Deus Ex 2 was having trouble selling through and retailers were cool at the prospect of another entry in the franchise showing up on their shelves when they still had stock of the underperforming sequel. I was a level artist on the project but was drafted to redesign the main character, Nathan Frost, from the original greaser cyberpunk dude (leather jacket, mirrorshades) to a more military, spec ops type guy. That was a pretty good team. Everyone was in it to win it.

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience in so many different gaming studios?
Ken: One catastrophe (I won't name the studio) was when a sister project turned out to be totally failing despite passing all of its publisher milestones. It turned out that the publisher's metrics for measuring progress was full of holes and the dev team was failing really badly without anyone noticing. They were about to hit alpha without a playable game. The whole project was a mess... the team culture, the software, the design and art quality... with really haphazard production and organization through and through. Everything you could do shitty was done shitty, but no one noticed because it was getting past milestones. So me and my top two leads were dropped in like the Three Horsemen of Death right on the cusp of Alpha and proceeded to strip the project down to its bones and then basically kick flesh back onto it over the next couple months. We shipped something that was actually good, and on time, out of something that was on fire. The three of us basically did the job of senior producers, but we chose to be credited with our usual creative titles. Publisher never knew. These behind the scenes stories are pretty common. There are so many weird stories and funny characters that they almost become commonplace in your memory. Most are best shared over a drink :P. Here's one, though... I worked with one engineer who used to work at NASA. Classic: glasses, trousers, short-sleeved dress shirt and tie, total Dilbert archetype, super smart. He was particularly touchy about getting assigned bugs, and would argue with QA over their validity, totally denying that any were in HIS code. One time he screamed "There are NO bugs in my code! I'm from NASA, where BUGS MEANT PEOPLE DIED. That's NOT my bug." (It totally was). Oh, here's one: At Crystal Dynamics, the Eidos management made a bet with the team that we could not get 80% of the team (women included in the count) to commit to wearing a moustache through Beta. If we could, the Eidos management would all wear the identical facial hair of the team's choosing for two months (or something) and *could not tell anyone why*. We made up a chart of approved moustaches... basically, you had to have a bare chin, no dictators or fictional characters. So no goatees, Hitler, no Fu Manchu. You had to commit to looking like an asshole. On the chart we had the John Waters, the Magnum PI, the Sam Neill (a Magnum that you let grow over your lip), the Lemmy, the Hetfield, the Musketeer, the Burt Reynolds, handlebars, etc. And the team did it! Now, it was pretty weird looking when we were together. Like, imagine you're out a lunch in Palo Alto and there's a table next to you of 6 people and they *all* have some variety of a porn 'stache. You' totally side-eye that group. And I had just bought my first cool car, a Mazda Miata: up until then I only had practical cards, Toyota Corollas and such. So here I am in my convertible, top down, feeling super cool, and I'd roll up to a stop light and glance to the side and see my reflection in a store window, with my moustache, looking like a total pervert. Ruined. So we won the bet, and the team chose the Hetfield for the Eidos heads. On the day after Beta, the entire dev team went to the Sears Photo Studio and had portraits taken. The group photos were framed on the entry wall at Crystal's old office and I heard they were up for a while. The individual portraits were put on mugs that, from what I hear, are still at Crystal... so there's someone drinking coffee out of a mug today that has my perv stache on it.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Ken!

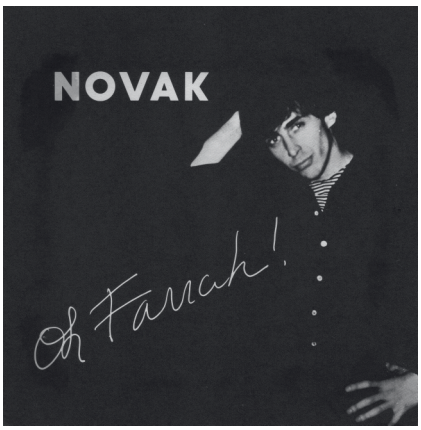
NOVAK

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Novak has been designing and developing award-winning video games for 29 years, creating branded properties and original IPs for many game publishers, including Sony, Nintendo, Electronic Arts, Sega of America, Nokia, Fox Interactive, Virgin Interactive, Simon and Schuster, the Haley Miranda Group, and Toyota/Scion. He started making games in 1982 as an assembly language programmer and designer at Sega's Coin-Op division during the Golden Age of the Video Arcade and has been publishing games regularly ever since. While Project Designer at Mattel Toys, Novak received the Creative Excellence Award and also attained Mattel's highest honor, receiving two Chairman's Awards for his game design of Nintendo's "Super Glove Ball" and for designing the interface used by the world's first interactive TV show, Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future. Before his immersion in all things digital, Novak was a central figure in San Francisco's emerging punk rock scene. He founded two independent record labels, Dumb Records and Nth Degree, and produced underground hit records for the most notorious first wave of SF bands such as The Nuns, Crime, The Readymades and The Survivors. Novak's undergraduate studies focused on avant-garde electronic art and music composition. He was the studio assistant of the 20th century's most influential composer and thinker, John Cage. He regularly gave lecture/demonstrations in local high schools with early synthesizer pioneer, Robert Moog, and produced many new music concerts for visiting experimental composers and artists, including Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Frederic Rzewski, Kenneth Gaburo, David Behrman, and Merce Cunningham. During his career Novak has worked at Zono Inc on such legendary lost games as Freak Boy (N64) and Ringman (Dreamcast). The first 4 questions of this interview were originally posted by Joe Stumble on January 2009 on his music blog, The Last Days of Man on Earth, now closed; republished here thanks to Novak.

Joe: In 1976 you get into Mills College in Oakland (California) for a Masters Degree in Composition and sometime later you founded your own indie label "Dumb Records" to publish your vinyl album under the name NOVAK. Can you tell us some more details about those early years?

Novak: My name is William Novak. For my NY band, we had Hells Angels as both protection and roadies (friends of the drummer), and the band all ended up wearing black Harley motorcycle jackets. When I got to San Francisco I had just cut off my long girl-hair into an extreme pompadour. With my New York accent, biker jacket and greaser hair, the other graduate students mocked me by doing 50s type greaser impersonations: Hey Novak, ya want some salad? while grabbing their crotch, ya know stuff like that. I started using just Novak, it stuck, and everyone I know to this day knows me as Novak. Sounds stupid but when I became better known and people started writing about me, the journalists went to great extremes to find out and publish my real name, so for kicks I went out of my way to keep it a big secret; it was good for press....



Joe: How did you get into punk/new wave music? Also, you were located in the Bay Area, but you seem to be a little separated from the San Francisco scene (Nuns, CRIME, Mutants). Is this a fair assessment?

Novak: Nope, I was right in the middle of it all when it first started, for quite a while. Early on (1977-78), I was pretty involved with The Nuns and CRIME; I produced The Nuns demo tape and CRIMEs second record, way before the heroin hit town. I knew some of the other bands, like I knew Sally Mutant and those guys but never really got that friendly for some reason; they were nice enough. Other punk bands like the Avengers pretty much avoided me; I said Hi to Penelope a few times but she was really chilly; I got the feeling they didn't like me one bit. It was later said

that a whole chunk of the SF punk scene was put off by me being a dandy fancy-pants grad student at a hoity-toity college like Mills. Also, I wasn't the fashionable flavor of punk, my stuff was definitely 60s garage-rock inspired. But also my attitude was fuck everybody, I paid my dues. Anyway, The Nuns and CRIME seemed to respect my academia and what I could do for them. After I recorded them I opened for both bands many times during 1977-78 (well, a lot of times for CRIME, just a few times for The Nuns). I think they liked having my band open for them as sort of a thank you for producing recordings for them for free and my band's material (cheesy 60s garage-ish) was so very much different than their songs and sound, there was no conflict. Also, my early bands were pretty crappy and sloppy, almost like comedy music. There was NO WAY I could ever upstage them.

Joe: After 80-81 you stopped recording records. Why?

Novak: In a nutshell: In 1982 I got a real job as an assembly language programmer and sound designer for SEGAs coin-op (arcade) division making video games. After getting into the Apple II in 79, I quickly became COMPLETELY OBSESSED with computers and software. In the early 80s I tried to program a comprehensive sound synthesis system- it was way beyond the Apples capability but I didn't know it; I thought it could do anything. I learned programming from a guy in Berkeley named John Draper who was very interested in the synthesis I was doing (waveform interpolation, inverse Fourier transforms, stuff like that). He was also known as Captain Crunch because his legacy was that he could make free, illegal phone calls to anywhere in the world by using the whistle from a box of Capn Crunch cereal. I later learned he didn't need the whistle - he could make free/illegal calls just by whistling with his mouth - he had perfect pitch and knew the telephone audio codes. He was also famous as one of the original Phone Phreaks in the early 70s. Those were the guys who broke into the Nixon White House's phone system: he went to the federal penitentiary for that one, I met him after he went straight. So after I graduated Mills CCM in early 1980 I had less and less energy to keep a band together as all I wanted to do was mess around with computers and program sound synthesis routines. In the prior 3 years I had played Mabuhay 50+ times and the best I could do was headline on an off-night like a Wednesday. Putting out records and paying for the band (truck rentals, gas, posters, and much time) was all paid for with what I earned as a waiter; it felt lame after a while. So I stopped playing around 1980; but I still needed that excitement and working with BOB was my outlet for that. The Mab scene changed a lot in 81-82. The early excitement of The Nuns and CRIME in 77-78 went away; they were sorta getting stale too. New bands arrived and it seemed like the audiences then were all kids from the suburbs.

Joe: What ever became of NOVAK? What have you been doing since then?

Novak: Around 1981 I dedicated my life to doing weird things with computers. Unfortunately doing weird things doesn't pay very well. Fortunately though, a Mills classmate was lucky enough to land a job at SEGA, and when they needed a guy to program their new digital-sound boards, he called me and I got the job after I showed them what I had done on the Apple II. I started working for SEGA in 1982 and have been making video games ever since. First I worked as a programmer then I became a designer. I left music for video games and never returned to writing music. Sega moved me to Los Angeles where I've been with wife Tina ever since. I met her at Mills more than 30 years ago. We now live in the Hollywood Hills. My first big hit game as a designer was Super Glove Ball when I was at Mattel Toys. It was a game for the Power Glove (anyone remember that thing?) and the old Nintendo NES. It was the first mass market cybernetic device and the game was the first consumer virtual reality software. I owned a game developer company in the 90s which lasted almost 14 years. I did a lot of SEGA Genesis games in the 90s. My biggest seller during that period was X-Men 2 which was based on the popular cartoon; they hadn't made X-Men movies yet.

Luca: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?
Novak: I do have a Playstation4 and Xbox One, but rarely play them. Games like Witcher 3, Fallout 4, Metal Gear Solid, and even the indie games take too much time to get into, and I just don't have the time. All my playing for the last 4-5 years has been on iPad, mainly because I don't have to go into another room for the PS4, I can spend the game playing time at night in bed with my wife and dog! I've been playing these a real lot: Templar Battleforce, Air Attack 2, Downwell, Inferno 2, Xenowerk, Star Hammer, Particle Mace, Operation Dracula. I do have a 3DS but rarely play it these days. I did like Fire Emblem and the Castlevania one, and I just got Etrian Odyssey 2 but haven't played it yet.

Luca: How was Freak Boy conceived? Who created its concept and how did it arrive at Virgin Interactive to become one of the first games announced for the Ultra 64?
Novak: In 1993 and 1994, I created the gameplay concept, demo and preliminary design doc of Freak Boy that I used to sign a joint-venture development partnership with Virgin Interactive, located in Irvine, California. Martin Alper was the President of Virgin and it was a priority and passion of his to get Virgin onto Nintendo's newly announced Dream Team. Trouble was, he didn't have a game in development or any early concepts that fit the bill. That's where I came in, after I heard Martin was determined to propose something to Nintendo's senior management. But first, let's set the stage with some things that were sorta on my mind that influenced the design of Freak Boy.
1980 - Atari's Battlezone game released in the arcades. It used vector graphics to draw three-dimensional shapes, but it was not raster-based polygonal 3D. 1985 and beyond - Super Mario games. 1988 - NAMCO's Winning Run racing arcade game, the first video game to use polygonal 3D graphics. 1989 - Tetris on Gameboy. 1990 - Working at Mattel Toys as a Project Designer, I published my first video game design. It was the 8-bit NES game, Super Glove Ball for the Mattel Power Glove. It was programmed (developed) by RARE in the UK. Their main programmer on it was a teenager, Paul Byford, who later joined me in the US as a Freak Boy programmer. And working with Chris and Tim Stamper was how I met all the cool European developers of the time.
1991 - Ed Zobrist and I left Mattel to start our own game development company, ZONO, Inc. Ed was Director of Boy's Toys Marketing at Mattel. Our mission was to create and develop video game concepts and then "sell" them to publishers who would fund their development. 1993 - Nintendo's Star Fox released for Super Nintendo SNES. It was expensive due to the SuperFX chip inside each cartridge. This chip was able to draw 3D polygonal graphics. October 1993 - SEGA releases 3D fighting game Virtua Fighter in the arcades. It was insanely popular and looked like nothing I had seen before. December 1993 - The original DOOM was released for MS-DOS machines. I've heard arguments that it is technically a 2D game, but it was the first game on a home computer that had convincing 3D graphics. This, and the earlier Wolfenstein (id) single handedly established the first-person shooter genre. December 1994 - SONY releases the original Playstation console. The hardware was designed to render 3D graphics, rather than the "normal" 2D sprite based hardware engines in large part because of Virtua Fighter's success.
In 1993, I originally wanted to make Freak Boy for the then un-released original Playstation. Much more on this below. For the first few years of our company, ZONO, it was just the two of us. I would work up ideas that either Ed or I had, or both of us had. Ed would then make the phones calls, establish contacts and the business side of things such as contracts, and I would develop the concepts into something we could show and present to prospective publishers. We needed to sell game concepts to get enough money to actually make them. In 1991, after 7-8 months in business as ZONO, I sold our first game, TechnoClash (1993), to Electronic Arts for play on the Sega Genesis. Ed made a deal with BlueSky Software in San Diego to develop it as a joint venture with us. Ed would manage the project and distribute the money from EA. I would serve as designer and programmer, and BlueSky did the lead programming, all art and sound/music (www.youtube.com/watch?v=pn2fqVWESak). As we were finishing up with TechnoClash, DOOM came out. We almost didn't finish TechnoClash on time because of it. The reason was, everybody stopped working and played DOOM all the time. All the time. It pretty much took over all the developers I knew. We had never seen anything like it and we all played it constantly. I came up with the Freak Boy concept in large part mainly because of DOOM's success and the huge phenomena that resulted, which I know sounds weird. DOOM is a FPS, Freak Boy was not in any way to be a FPS, which was the point. This is because, back then, EVERYBODY wanted to make a game just like DOOM. Everybody was pitching FPS's to publishers non-stop, even though they

probably couldn't have pulled off John Carmack's inspired, break-thru software engineering. In reaction to this, I wanted to do the opposite so I wouldn't be competing with all the Doom-clones on the horizon. I knew I wanted to do something in 3D, and started thinking about what to do in a 3D game-space with a character.

Luca: Can you explain how Freak Boy's gameplay would have been? How would players have been able to gain new powers and combine them together to create new ones? How would these powers be used to proceed in the game?

Novak: The original 1993-4 name of Freak Boy was "Stacker" because the main play mechanic consisted of stacking pieces a certain way in your character's body. The position of pieces in the "stack" determined a piece's function or special ability. For example:

- Drill Piece: If placed in the leg/foot, your guy could drill downward through the floor and open up new areas. If in the belly area, you could drill forward and break through walls and stuff. If in the head, you could drill upwards through ceilings, overhangs and/or enemies.
- Sticky Piece: If in foot, can better walk on slanted or narrow planks without falling off. If in belly, can stick to a wall and inch your way up. If in head, stick to the ceiling and "walk"/glide with your head over barriers, etc.
- Gun Piece: Foot: shoot bullets across the floor, tracking hills and killing crawling guys. Belly: Shoot straight out and around you. Head: Shoot bullets in an arc to shoot over barriers enemies are hiding behind.
- Bomb Piece, and I can't remember all the others, etc. etc. etc.

To get a piece, say the Drill, you'd jump on it. The piece enters your body and becomes your Drill foot. If you then jump on a Sticky piece, the Drill moves up to your belly, and the Sticky becomes your foot. If you then jump on a Gun piece, the Drill moves to the head, then Sticky to the belly, and the Gun goes into the foot. Pressing the "Pop" button ejects the top-most piece in the stack onto the playfield. And it's how you would detonate the Bomb. The Design Goals I had in my mind were:

- It had to be rendered in polygonal 3D, the hot new thing in video games
- It had to be as different and as far away from DOOM as possible
- I knew people liked having their guy run around and jump on things: Super Mario Bros
- People also liked arranging objects in certain order to accomplish a task: Tetris

Luca: Was Freak Boy always planned to be a Nintendo 64 game or there were plans to develop it for other consoles or PC?

Novak: When creating the design, Sony was my one and only choice to present Stacker (Freak Boy) to because of a few things. I had heard they were going to release a game console to compete with Nintendo. Most everyone thought for sure it was going to be a huge failure, because Nintendo ruled the video game console world. I was also a huge fan of SONY because of the Walkman a decade earlier, their recording studio technologies, and also, at this time Sony still made the absolute best TV's with their XBR line of sets. I had worked with Nintendo before while making Super Glove Ball at Mattel. The people I worked with at Nintendo of America were really nice (Howard Phillips, Gail Tilden, a little with Howard Lincoln). But their approval process to get the cartridges made was very, very difficult. Nintendo (the people were mainly in Japan I think) was extremely strict and a bit arrogant because they were the only game in town. On the other hand, when I heard about a possible Sony machine, we started calling around and sure enough, Sony was actively soliciting game developers to sign up for Playstation. Over a few months I met with them three times in their Culver City, California offices, and they were all enthusiastic for me doing Stacker (Freak Boy). They had an elaborate, detailed presentation of what they were doing with their Developer Program, with all the development software and hardware they would provide for free, with "endless" support and in-person help. They were bending over backwards to get developers on board the Playstation, and it worked. I was wrapping up a Stacker presentation to show Sony. I wanted to convince Sony to fund and publish it as a Sony-branded game. Then I got a phone call from Rebecca Allen. She was a computer graphics pioneer that Mattel had brought in years earlier as a consultant on a few projects, and that's where I got to know her. Anyway, now she was an Executive Producer at Virgin Interactive. She was the one who told me that their President, Martin Alper, was desperate to have a game idea to take to Nintendo. He wanted to get Virgin on the recently announced "Dream Team" but didn't have any in-house concepts to show them. So she asked me if I had been working on anything they might be interested in. At first, I told her no, I have this Stacker concept, but I was taking it to Sony.

When I told my partner about this, he convinced me to give Virgin a shot, and not to put all my hope into Sony, as they might pass on Stacker/Freak Boy when it came time for them to fund us. So I ended up meeting with Virgin and Martin Alper. He loved the idea and immediately worked out a deal with my partner to bring me on-board as a contracted designer. Part of the deal was how money would be split up if we got Nintendo's sign-up, how much they would pay me to work on-site in their studios, who owned it, and things like that. Virgin and Martin Alper then arranged for me to meet with the top Nintendo executives at the January 1994 Winter C.E.S. in Las Vegas, in like THREE WEEKS! They paid for me to go to the newly-formed Digital Domain, James Cameron's visual effects company. I worked with them to make a short video of a Stacker character showing how pieces were captured, used in various body positions, and popped out. It was really short, like 30 seconds, because this kind of computer graphics work was VERY expensive. The video was rather plain, the character being a generic-looking, featureless guy. I don't have a copy of the video now, unfortunately. We did this over the Christmas holidays. (At the time, the Consumer Electronics Show was were all the video game companies showed their new and upcoming releases. E3 didn't come into being until 1995, and E3 took over all the video game stuff that used to be at CES after that). Martin Alper, Rebecca Allen and I met with Nintendo senior executives in a conference room at the January 1994 CES. I was never so nervous in my life. There were 5 or 6 of them, all from Nintendo Japan, all "older" gentlemen and all were wearing gray suits. When I first met them as I entered the room, they were stern-faced and very serious looking. No smiles or joking around with these guys. And one of them was the person who created and developed the original 1986 Metroid, my all-time favorite NES game, and that made me even more nervous. My presentation to them contained the 30 second video and some diagrams I made, but it was mainly me talking and walking them through how the game worked. I started off by telling them I wanted to make the game the "Nintendo Way" and not the way Americans tended to make games at the time. I explained that American developers tended to concentrate on the art and level layouts first, while the programmers were working out how to code the play mechanics. Nintendo, on the other hand, STARTED with the play mechanics, got the program code working they way they wanted, and THEN started building the world around the gameplay actions. I then tried acting out like I was the Stacker/Freak Boy character. I walked up to a wall and pressed my stomach against a wall to demonstrate the Sticky piece in my belly. To demonstrate the Drill piece, I stood up on a chair, made a pointy shape with my two arms above my head, and jumped up hitting the ceiling to show them how to drill upwards. This move (unintentionally) punched out a tile in the ceiling and the Nintendo executives all started laughing. I'm glad I didn't fall off the chair! For the rest of my presentation, they were all smiling, laughing and nodding. Sometime later after all the contracts and agreements were made, Virgin joined the Dream Team!

Luca: What do you remember about the early days of the Nintendo "Ultra 64" and the organization of the infamous "dream team", composed of many big names in the gaming industry at the time?

Novak: When we all (i.e., the game developers I knew) heard of Nintendo's plan for a Dream Team, a lot of us thought they had lost their minds. The initial announcement of a VERY SMALL, "elite" number of developers puzzled us. Sega had hundreds of developers for their Genesis, Sony was lining up hundreds of guys for the upcoming Playstation. And Nintendo had 8 or 10 and that was it? People were also puzzled about their selection of developers. Remembering the members of the early Dream Team:

- Rare Ltd. OK this made sense. Rare made tons of games for the NES and SNES, and they were really good.
- Williams Electronics - OK this sorta made sense. Williams' main effort was in designing and producing pinball machines and video arcade cabinets. But they had never made any game software for home consoles. It's a whole different mind-set.
- Paradigm Simulation - they had never made a game, but they had good simulation technology, and the word was they were working under Miyamoto's direction.
- Gametek had crappy little games and no hits.
- Acclaim was known for spending all their money on expensive movie licenses and putting out really bad games based on them. In my opinion, Acclaim was the start of the industry-wide perception that movie-based-games were garbage.
- Spectrum Holobyte and Sierra Online were computer game developers and never made a console game.

- GTE Interactive Media and Angel Studios had never made a game.
- Angel Studios was a computer graphics studio in San Diego that made animations for advertising and movies. I ended up working with them later because the next game after Freak Boy that I designed (with Ed Annunziata) was Mr. Bones for Sega Saturn. Angel Studios did the computer graphics cinematic cut scenes for Mr. Bones. Fun Fact: In November 2003 Angel Studios was bought by Take-two and renamed Rockstar San Diego.

Other early day N64 memories: At the start, we were ramping up the team, searching for artists and programmers with 3D graphics experience. We were housed in one of the two or three large buildings that Virgin had in Costa Mesa, California. There were at least 8-9 projects in production when I arrived. For example, Toonstruck had just started up, and they were shooting the greenscreen live-action video with Christopher Lloyd (Back to The Future actor) out in the parking lot behind the building. At the center of the early N64 software development "kit" was a Silicon Graphics (SG) computer. SG made medium and high-end computer graphics workstations. Nintendo chose this computer to emulate the N64 hardware which wasn't ready yet. The SG computer was very expensive, even by software development standards. It cost between $40,000 - $110,000, depending on configuration. The SG was a large cube and it required a "clean room" and some serious refrigeration in order to run. So Virgin had to build a special room right next to our team's room. It was the size of a very large closet, it had to be sealed up to keep all dust out of it, and it needed refrigeration. The refrigeration unit was placed on the roof, so they had to cut holes through the roof, and build a whole duct system. Walking into the SG room was like walking into a large refrigerator in a restaurant set to "cold." Between building the clean room, wiring, ducting, refrigeration and networking to the team room, the whole "development kit" cost about $400,00 - $500,000 depending on who I talked to. At the time I was coming off programming a Sega Genesis game and I thought how crazy expensive doing 3D games were. The Genesis development kit toward the end of its life-cycle consisted of a PC and a $125 board that plugged into the cartridge slot of the Genesis. You'd download your program to this board and it was like it was on a cartridge. Also at the start, everyone was afraid of the 3D graphics, because, except for one programmer, no one had ever done anything with real 3D polygonal graphics. We were all 2D sprite guys. I was especially concerned about what to do with the camera in 3D space. 3D PC games like Fade to Black and others had serious problems with the automatic placement of the camera, which would cut off places you had to jump onto, and other important things the player needed to see in order to succeed in the game. Once we were able to see Mario 64 and Nintendo's brilliant solution of "dragging" the camera behind Mario, it was a really big relief. Mario 64's camera system was simple, elegant and intuitive for the player. And in a way, so obvious I was embarrassed I didn't think of it!

Luca: How did the name change from "Stacker" to "Freak Boy" come about?

Novak: Early on, the Virgin lawyers did a trademark/copyright search on the name "Stacker". It turned out there was a computer hardware company in California that trademarked "Stacker" for their line of high-density industrial disk drives (that "stacked" up). So I set out to come up with a new name for the game. I had a list of 25-30 names as possible candidates. When I was going through them with the Art Director on the project, Patrick Moran, Freak Boy caught his eye and said, "This is the one!" Patrick spent a couple of years studying with a comic book artist and was really into underground comics. He said something like Freak Boy is a modern, comicbook-type name, and he told me about how HellBoy had just come out the year earlier and was getting a lot of attention in the underground comic world. So I went to the producer-at-the-time to tell him what the new name was. (Producers changed every couple of months, more on this below). Anyway, this producer, who shall remain nameless because he was a real jerk, told me "No way. Over my dead body will it be called Freak Boy". He wanted to call it "Amp" or something like that. By the way, as the team got bigger, I started losing control of the direction of the game, and this is a good example. What the thing was, is that I was an outsider and the middle-management and Vice Presidents at Virgin resented the fact that they were working on a game that didn't originate in the Virgin Studios. They were pissed that President Martin Alper brought in an outsider with a project. They resented the fact that they couldn't come up with something that would have gotten Virgin on the Dream Team. And they took it out on the Freak Boy project, because they each had their own pet-projects they were trying to get approved for development. Also, except for me and programmer Paul Byford (who came from Rare), all the team members were Virgin employees, so they did exactly what the producer told them, because he was their boss. He could promote them, give them raises, or fire them. So the team went with the producer when I

had a disagreement with him. It was pretty ironic because I was the reason they all were hired in the first place. More on this when I talk about the pre-rendered animation that was shown at E3. So when the producer said "Over my dead body . . ." I entered a period when I HATED THE NAME OF MY OWN GAME! I don't remember how many months it was, but one day I was called into the Vice President's office, and the producer was there too. They were really, really mad and started yelling at me. They were mad because President Martin Alper told them he wanted the name of the game to be Freak Boy and that a trademark search has come up clean with the lawyers. They accused me of going behind their backs and pleading with Alper to strong-arm them. But I didn't do it, I didn't go to Alper at all. They didn't believe me, and I don't think they ever believed me even after the truth came out about what happened. So I went to Martin Alper to essentially thank him and find out how he even knew about the name Freak Boy in the first place. He knew it originally as Stacker, and wasn't aware that the producer said "Over my dead body will it be called Freak Boy". He told me that a few days ago he had a meeting with MTV about maybe making TV shows based on Virgin games. But he didn't feel like he had enough material that would interest them. The morning of the meeting he was in the copy/printer room, and two secretaries were in there, and they were talking about "Freak Boy". How they knew about the name and why they were talking about it is still a mystery, but there's always a lot of gossip in the office. Martin said the name caught his attention and he thought it would appeal to MTV more than any other name in development. So Freak Boy it was, and it really pissed off the middle-management executives that Martin overrode them.

Luca: The graphic style of Freak Boy was really original for its time, an abstract and cool mix of polygons and vibrant colors, only in the last few years we were able to see something like that again in videogames, with titles such as FRACT OST. Who designed the style of Freak Boy and was there anything in particular that inspired it?
Novak: It was the Art Director, Patrick Moran, who created the look of Freak Boy and the look of the worlds. I don't think he was influenced by anything other than the conversations we had. He was also the one who picked the Freak Boy out of my list as his favorite name. These days, Patrick has an art gallery in Laguna Beach, California, and has returned to selling his paintings. He's been a classically trained artist his whole life. I haven't seen him since the Freak Boy days, but have been in touch every once in a while. Patrick Moran's Art Gallery: www.morangallery.com

Luca: How many people were working in the Freak Boy team?
Novak: I think it got up to 35-40 people, not counting the administrative people. But at times, employees were moved around to different projects going on. A number of other projects got into trouble while I was there, and Virgin moved people around to try to put out the fires.

Luca: Was Freak Boy divided into different levels or was it a single, big world to explore?
Novak: It definitely was not a big open world. It was different levels. I believe I used the Hub model to structure how individual levels were laid out and unlocked. The "Hub model" refers to a wheel, like a bicycle or wagon wheel, where the Hub is in the middle and the game levels branch off from the Hub like spokes on a wheel.

Luca: What do you remember about "Freak Boy" pre-rendered animation that was shown at E3?
Novak: This Animation was done without my knowledge and definitely without my approval. IT COMPLETELY MISREPRESENTED THE GAME DESIGN! It came from the "Over my dead body" producer. In his contract with Virgin, there was what's called a "Completion Bonus." Completion Bonuses were fairly common to give producers an incentive to finish a game by a certain date, like the Christmas season. He would get the Completion Bonus if he could get Freak Boy done in EIGHT MONTHS! He came to the conclusion that the only way to finish anything in eight months was to turn Freak Boy into a driving game, which was much easier to produce than a puzzle-based, "free roaming", third-person action/adventure type of game. So behind my back, he told select team members that Freak Boy is now a driving game, and to put together a video to show it this way for E3. After E3, of course I was furious and eventually dragged Martin Alper into the battle. Many fights went on and before it went back to my original design.

Luca: A few gaming websites during the N64 era wrote that Freak Boy had to be

reworked many times, what kind of changes were asked and why? How many of these changes were implemented?
Novak: They weren't changes in the traditional sense, they were complete overhauls, when all previous work was thrown out and the artists, and sometimes the programmers, had to start over from scratch. This happened a couple of times. The reason was that producers were switched around the Virgin studios like crazy. Freak Boy had a least five different producers over two and a half years. Rebecca Allen, who brought me into Virgin, argued constantly with the Vice Presidents, and after a while she couldn't stand it anymore and left the company. We even had a period of 3-4 months where we had no producer, which was great because we could get a lot more work done. I think the reason producers were shifted around so much was because other projects going on were behind their release dates and things like that. When other Virgin projects got into trouble, they would throw a new producer in there in the hope they could turn it around. If they didn't fix-it in 5-6 months, they would be removed and reassigned to another, and another producer would be sent in. Typically, when a new producer came onto Freak Boy, they threw out the previous producer's development plan, and threw out the work that was done under him/her. The reason was, that if the previous producer screwed up, the new producer didn't want to have anything to do with fixing someone else's mess. So to play safe, they threw out everything. This is very similar in the motion picture industry: when a new studio head comes in, it's not unusual for them to cancel all movies in development to wipe the slate clean. The best example of this that I will never forget: One of the Freak Boy artists, Quinto Martin (I think that was his name) made an interior of an alien space ship that was stunning, gorgeous, and the likes of which I have never seen in a video game. He did it mainly in oranges, browns and blacks. The entire team rallied behind it and thought it was fantastic. We were all excited to be so far-out, ground-breaking, and cool. Enter another new producer to Freak Boy (who shall remain nameless). When he saw Quinto's spaceship art, he said: "When I walk up real close and look at a wall, I want to see ALL of the N64's colors, no matter where I look." To tell you what a royally STUPID comment this is, consider that: The N64 has 16.7 million colors available, and is able to display up to 32,768 simultaneous colors on-screen. So . . . this moron producer essentially said he wants to see 32,000 colors no matter where he looks. So the producer threw out Quinto's great spaceship. This is the MAIN reason Freak Boy was never completed: throwing out good work for no reason other than a new producer has come in.

Luca: How much of the game was finished before the cancellation?
Novak: It's really hard to put a number on it because whole chunks were in different stages of completion, and I had long left Virgin and Freak Boy a year or two before the "official" cancellation. More on this cancellation below.

Luca: Why was Freak Boy cancelled? There's an article on IGN that say that the game's code was reworked too many times and became so messy that it was not possible to create a proper game anymore.
Novak: No, it wasn't the game's code. It's because the whole of Virgin Interactive was on a path to demise. Sometime around a year after Freak Boy started, Virgin Interactive posted a loss of some $250 million or so. I don't know for sure what happened at the highest levels, but what people were talking about was that Virgin's owner dropped them like a hot potato, and Virgin had to find some big money, and fast. When I started at Virgin there were a lot of game projects in production at the time in their studios. After this financial loss, in-house projects started to get cancelled, one by one, and whole teams were laid off. By the time I left Virgin after much disgust, only Freak Boy and one other game, a driving game they were doing for Sony, was left. But Freak Boy was dead with all the re-starts, even though they didn't officially announce it was cancelled for well over a year. This is what happened: After about two and half years on it, it became painfully clear to me that Freak Boy would never get done at Virgin. Cancellation of other projects and layoffs really depressed the team. All the re-starts and change of producers also took their toll on the project, the team and on me. And Virgin's Vice Presidents hated my guts and behind the scenes did whatever they could to retard Freak Boy production in order to presumably try and save their own pet projects. So after two and a half years I wanted out. Seeing how Virgin was deteriorating, I had been working for awhile to get other outside projects off the ground. I told my business partner I couldn't take it anymore, and that the project was hopeless. There was a clause thing in our contract, so I was able to pull out legally. So why didn't Virgin announce the cancellation at this time, when I left? It's because of another clause in our contract. I don't

remember the wording of this clause, but it said something like, that if it wasn't completed in some time frame, or was cancelled, THE RIGHTS TO THE GAME WOULD REVERT BACK TO ZONO (my company). Yes, my partner was a pretty sharp business guy. This pissed off the Virgin Vice Presidents even more when they learned of this. They were furious when they found out that after all the money spent in two years, that Virgin wouldn't even own the game and it would go back to me (ZONO) if they cancelled it. So Virgin didn't officially cancel Freak Boy for over a year, mainly, in my opinion, out of pure spite. When I left, development was halted, but they told the press it was still in production, because they didn't want the rights to go back to ZONO. I had some friends who were on Virgin's Freak Boy team, and they told me that after I left, the whole N64 team was moved off Freak Boy and onto a Las Vegas casino gambling game for the N64 that was the brainchild of yet another new producer, who I never met.

Luca: How much of the game was playable in the first prototype that you were able to preserve? In september 2015 a reader of Unseen64 randomly found a working early prototype of Freak Boy at a carboot sale in Guildford, UK.
Novak: I don't know. That Freak Boy cart the fellow in the UK found that you posted video of, was not the first or only prototype. We regularly burned carts to test it out on the target hardware, the N64.

Luca: After Freak Boy was officially canned, which was the next game that you worked on?
Novak: On the Freak Boy contract, I was required to be onsite in the studio for three days a week. I used the other days, of course, to work on Freak Boy, but I also scouted for new projects. As a game designer, you are always looking for what your next project is going to be. I hooked back up with my all-time favorite producer, Ed Annunziata, at Sega of America. Ed had this idea about a blues guitarist who was a skeleton. Ed and I designed Mr. Bones together, which was released on the Sega Saturn in 1996.

Luca: Do you still work on videogames? Which was the last game that you designed and released?
Novak: Yes, I teach video game design, and am head of the Game Art & Design department at Woodbury University in Burbank, California. So the games I work and help on are beginning student projects, not my stuff. The ten years before I started teaching, I contracted to a number of venture capital startup game studios. Some of the things I designed were Edge-Racers (MMO) that is currently in "legal-limbo" because the company was sold. Also I worked on another online thing called "MyHollywood" a game destination for middle-age women who didn't play games. This company spent all their money before we could finish it, and they went out of business.

Luca: Who own the Freak Boy license today? Do you think that the project could be resurrected one day, or it was a child of its time and it would not be the same to release something like it in the current market?
Novak: I guess technically, my old company ZONO, Inc., still owns it, but Zono went out of business some 10-15 years ago. For me Freak Boy represents a moment in a certain time frame in video game history. Personally, I can't see going back to it, but . . . if someone wanted to spend a lot of money making it for PS4 or Xbone, well, I'd have to think pretty hard about that one.

Luca: If you have any other interesting memories about creating Freak Boy, they are welcome :)
Novak: I met and worked with a lot of fantastic artists, programmers and designers. Most of them continued on in the game industry and got even better and better at it. I always wondered what would have happened if I never met with Virgin, and went straight to Sony first. The experience of landing a major game project with a major game studio on a major console was exhilarating and fantastic for about the first year. What happened, with the Virgin VP's, producers, and ultimately the death of the whole project, was so devastating to me I never created another original IP (Intellectual Property). After that I preferred to be Lead Designer on projects that someone else originated. After all the dust settled, years later I always referred to Freak Boy as "The best video game in the world that was never made!"

MoRE Museum: Elisabetta Modena, Marco Scotti

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

MoRE is a digital museum that collects, preserves and exhibits on-line refused and unrealised art projects of the XX and XXI century. The museum collects and exhibit projects that have been conceived on purpose for specific occasions, in determined contexts, even though not necessarily commissioned, and that have not been realized due to technical, logistic, ideological, economical, moral or ethical reasons, or were simply utopic, or a theoretical exercise around the theme of the unrealised. The museum aims at giving value, preserve and study those materials through research projects and exhibitions, capitalizing all the potential of the Web. The museum originates from an idea of Elisabetta Modena and Marco Scotti that are in charge of managing the archives, planning temporary exhibitions and coordinating the editorial activity and the debate together with a team of researchers, scholars, content and project managers, with the collaboration of a scientific committee and of invited external curators.
www.moremuseum.org

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about who you are, your studies and what you are working on today.

Marco Scotti: Since last month (June 2016) I hold a PhD in art history. I am a curator and contemporary art historian too, currently working on post-PhD research at CSAC - Università di Parma. While at Accademia SantaGiulia, Brescia, I'm an adjunct professor for the course in Videogame Screenwriting together with Elisabetta, and I also designed with her www.moremuseum.org, a digital museum / archive / virtual exhibition dedicated to unrealised contemporary art projects. So I've obviously always been really really into unrealised videogames!

Elisabetta Modena: My cv is pretty similar: I hold a PhD in Parma and I am a curator and contemporary art historian too. Actually I am also working for the educational program for CSAC's Servizi Museali in Parma and in this field I am exploring the theme of the edutainment.

Luca: As we can read in your website, the MoRE Museum is a digital archive to collect, preserve and exhibit refused and unrealised art projects: can you tell us more details about the project, what you are trying to achieve, as well as when and how it all started?

Marco Scotti: Everything started from a conversation between me and Elisabetta. We were trying to found out new ideas for our researches at the University of Parma, where we both were PhD students, and to analyze the possibilities of digital museums and archives, following what was happening with the Digital Humanities projects in many American universities. We then started developing the project with many colleagues and friends, and became something independent - even if it always kept an academic identity: we are still part of CAPAS, a centre of the University - where curators, project managers, media and communication experts could contribute. Unrealised art projects seemed the perfect subject for our research from the start: usually artist and critics try to hide them out - in architecture for example is quite usual to publish them -, to consider them as failures or missed opportunities, and the critical debate is still very thin. Moreover they are perfect materials to test and understand the potential of a virtual museum / archive, for their very own in progress and ephemeral nature!

Elisabetta Modena: We also aim to study and understand better the art system, the theme of artist's production and the role of the project in respect to the artwork. In this sense we refer to a specific line of studies carried out by the University of Parma and merged in the Museum-Archive CSAC of Parma (Study Centre and Communication Archive), founded in 1968 by Professor Arturo Carlo Quintavalle and concentrated on assembling a collection of fine art, photography, architectural drawings, design, fashion and graphics, as well as organizing exhibitions and

publishing catalogs.

Luca: Do you also have an "offline" archive for all those documents and artifacts that artists send to you to be preserved? Do you have a permanent location to exhibit the works collected by MoRE?
Marco Scotti: Not really, no. Since the start we decided to collect and preserve only digital materials - born digital or digitized by the artists in their studio - so we could focus on what we really were into: digital curation and preservation. Moreover this allowed us to be much more free from some art system dynamics: the economic value of the "real" artist project for example could have been a problem in some cases, with this digital-only policy we can focus just on the research. So our permanent venue is our website, even if there have been opportunities to exhibit drawings, models and other "originals": for example the exhibition we curated last year in Parma, MoRE Spaces PERCORSI NELL'ARCHIVIO DEL NON REALIZZATO, at Palazzo Pigorini, where we re-constructed and showed unrealised projects by Valerio Berruti, Davide Bertocchi, David Casini, CRASH! (Scott King & Matthew Worley), Matthew Darbyshire, Flavio Favelli, Regina José Galindo, Goldschmied & Chiari, Franco Guerzoni & Luigi Ghirri, Ugo La Pietra, Claudia Losi, Eva Marisaldi, Jonathan Monk, Liliana Moro, Giovanni Ozzola, Cesare Pietroiusti, Luigi Presicce, Paolo Scheggi, Lorenzo Scotto di Luzio, Sissi, Luca Trevisani, Massimo Uberti, Luca Vitone, Erwin Wurm & Coop Himmelb(l)au.

Luca: How do you approach artists to collect their unrealized works? Are they usually open to let people to see something they were not able to complete, or are there some reasons why they don't want to show those unfinished ideas?
Elisabetta Modena: The museum accepts donations of one or more unrealised art works of every author on digital format. The gathering is by invitation, offer and demand by the Scientific Committee members and curators. Each application is evaluated on its relevance to the purposes of the museum by the Scientific Committee which, together with the exception of the member proposing, assess the quality of the proposed project and decide by a majority whether to add it in the archive of the museum itself. The donation contemplates the right of usufruct by the artist and does not entail the impossibility to realize the donated project in case of opportunity.
Marco Scotti: Every artist has its own approach: some of them consider unrealised projects as an important part of their research, or as a way to explore utopian themes. In fact some projects are simply designed to be unrealizable! But obviously some others are still failures in the eye of the artist, missed opportunities, lost competitions. The relationship with the artists we choose to invite and work with is the most important thing, so we can then operate as digital archaeologists and reconstruct the project in all its phases...

Luca: Do you receive any aid from traditional museums for the MoRE project? How do you interact with other artistic and historical organizations to find support for your research?
Marco Scotti: Usually we try to collaborate with museums and institutions on specific projects. University of Parma has always been an obvious technical and research partner, and it's strictly linked in many ways with the project, but there have been many partnerships: Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa in Venice for example invited us to participate in a workshop, with the Museo del Novecento in Milan we organized a conference where researchers, artists and various professionals from the art world talked about the theme of unrealised, while MSU in Zagreb hosted us for a residence, where we studied the local avant-gardes, their archives, and we presented the project to the Croatian public. In this case for example we met on a common ground, as they were developing the Digitizing ideas project, a digital archive of conceptual art practices in Central and South-eastern Europe in the 60s and 70s.

Luca: Why do you think unrealised art should be preserved? What makes it interesting to look at something that will never be?
Marco Scotti: There are many pretty good reasons. Basically we believe that unrealised projects are fundamental to understand the research of an artist, his practice, his ways of working and developing ideas. And they could be very important also to understand how the dynamics between artist and the different kind of commissioners orient and modify the projects during their developing.
Elisabetta Modena: If you think for example to architecture, this question would not make much

sense. Many architects actually achieve to build a minimum percentage of what they design during their lifetime and it's normal for them to show and publish their unrealised projects. Is it possible today to consider in a different way art and design, videogame and architecture etc.? The art historian Boris Groys noted a few years ago that the theme of the design and the project has assumed in our age an increasingly significant role and an autonomous status which importance has not yet been fully understood.

Luca: Which are the main reasons why an art project is never realized? Too much ambition? Lack of funds?
Marco Scotti: We have tried to define several categories, studying the projects we collected: Failure to meet the commissioner's demands, theoretical exercise, logistical reasons, financial reasons, ethical reasons, regulatory / juridical / administrative reasons, project which wasn't selected in a prize or competition, ideological reasons, technical reasons, political reasons, project abandoned by the artist... But usually lack of funds is the most common one to find out!

Luca: Do you think that videogames could be seen as some kind of art? Are there any "characteristics" that we can value to decide if a game should be considered art or not?
Elisabetta Modena: This is an excellent question, considering the controversy raised not long ago by their entry of a selection of videogames in MoMA's design collection. No doubt on the videogame's value, quite a reticence due to the moral panic that it still generates especially at the general media level.
Marco Scotti: Yes, I don't have any doubt about it! However, I think that we shouldn't even ask this question: videogames are so important nowadays that they should be studied as we usually do with other still or moving images. Probably it's easier to apply aesthetic categories or art history models on some of them, that focus more on some visual aspects, but they remain such a peculiar form of visual design that they probably don't even need to be considered art. I prefer to consider the juxtapositions and contaminations between genres and languages, images and samples...

Luca: Preserving history and art is often tough and grueling work, but every researcher has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience as an art historian?
Marco Scotti: I've always been quite lucky with MoRE, and working with artists has always been great fun (well, really demanding too..). Sometimes studios visit and long talks with artists to reconstruct and find out unrealised projects involve many drinks, and this usually brings to funny and quite incredible stories, but for now it's better to keep them private! And sometimes archive researches are the perfect way to discover stories and people you could never reach otherwise: I worked as a detective together with Anna Zinelli to discover the materials and the people involved in an unrealised project by Gorgona, a Croatian avant-garde group from the late 60s we really fell in love with.

Luca: Which are some of your favorite videogames? What are you playing lately?
Marco Scotti: The list of my favourite videogames is pretty long, and changes everyday. Moreover, I'm really lucky as I'm currently teaching Videogame Screenwriting at Accademia SantaGiulia in Brescia, so I also have to work with games! Currently I'm playing Proteus and Hotline Miami, as I missed them when they first came out, but Sensible World of Soccer and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis will forever be in my top ten list (I'm tied to the 90s, I know...).
Elisabetta Modena: Actually I'm attracted by very mainstream videogames, but I was recently fascinated by some "walking simulator" like The Vanishing of Ethan Carter (The Astronauts, 2014) I discovered thanks to the researchers of Archivio Videoludico in Bologna (www.cinetecadibologna.it/archivi-non-film/videoludico), a place that I'd like to mention in this interview because it is an extraordinary archive of (realized) videogames, and a forward-thinking and scientifically correct experiment, where every year we bring the students of our Videogame Screenwriting course. There is still much to do in this direction: it is a long way to go to give dignity to videogame as a medium and as a cultural product and I actually believe that your work contributes in this sense a decisive way!

Luca: that was the last question, thanks for your time!

National Videogame Museum

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Tony Peters

The goal of the National Videogame Museum (Frisco, TX) is to document, first hand, as much information about the creation and evolution of the videogame industry as possible and preserve as many physical artifacts as possible for generations to come. The vast majority of the people who created the videogame industry had no idea how enormous it would become and therefore never really saw much importance in what they were doing. The founder of Atari, Nolan Bushnell, felt he was creating something huge and saw videogames as having the potential to become a "billion dollar business". There are individual games that make that much today. The National Videogame Museum presents the information and as many of the physical artifacts as possible to the public in an entertaining and informative way. Videogames are meant to be played and that is the underlying thought behind each and every exhibit in the museum, to allow museum patrons the opportunity to actually play as many games as possible during their visit.
www.nvmusa.org

Unseen64: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about who you are, your experience in the videogame industry and your role at the National Videogame Museum.

NVG: The co-founders are: Sean Kelly, John Hardie and Joe Santulli. Together, they have been collecting videogames and related items for over 30 years. Sean and Joe both own gaming stores in Chicago and New Jersey, respectively.

Unseen64: As we can read in your website, the goal of the National Videogame Museum is to document as much information about the creation and evolution of the videogame industry: can you tell us more details about the project, what you are trying to achieve, why it's important to preserve electronic game and how it all started?

Sean Kelly: There are many different ways I could answer this question, but indulge me a little with this explanation if you will... Today, explorers and archeologists go to great lengths to find out as much information about their discoveries as they possibly can. If the ruins of an ancient civilization are uncovered, archeologists go to painstaking lengths with chisels, pick-axes and tiny brushes to preserve every last detail possible. Imagine how much more information or knowledge we would have about past civilizations if those people had the technology and foresight to preserve information about important parts of their cultures. We have both the foresight and the technology to do it today, why wouldn't we? Videogames are a HUGE part of many people's lives. More than half of all Americans play videogames at some point in every day. Wouldn't it be amazing if archeologists 5000 years from now could not only read about the "Angry Birds craze" but potentially be able to actually PLAY the game? I certainly don't mean to imply that an iPhone with a copy of Angry birds on it that still works in the year 7016 is the equivalent of the Rosetta Stone, but we strongly believe that we should preserve as much insight into our past for future generations as possible.

Unseen64: Do you think that videogames could be seen as some kind of art? Are there any "characteristics" that we can value to decide if a game should be considered art or not?

Sean Kelly: Absolutely! There is no question that videogames are art. In fact, a videogame is one of the most complete expressions of art there is. Most people wouldn't disagree that more common artforms are paintings (or graphical artistic expressions), music and literature. A videogame is all three of these combined into one.

Unseen64: What kind of exhibitions and workshops are organized by the National Videogame Museum?

NVG: Here is a list of some of our exhibits:

Pixel Dreams: A 1980s-inspired arcade full of timeless classics such as Asteroids, Centipede, Donkey Kong, Space Invaders and more.
Giant Pong: Play the classic game Pong on the world's largest home Pong console on a giant 15-foot TV replica from the 1970s.
Head-to-Head Hall: A hall full of gaming stations where you can go head-to-head with friends, family or competitors in tournaments. Guests may find a set of game systems and games they've never seen before or find a tribute to their favorite game franchise played on 10 different systems. The hall takes advantage of NVM's 12,000+ library of games and will be an ever-changing area of fun.
Gearbox behind the scenes: See the actual office of Randy Pitchford, founder of Gearbox Software and creator of the games Borderlands, Brothers in Arms and Duke Nukem Forever.
The Timeline of Consoles: Learn the stories and see artifacts from more than 50 past and present videogame consoles on a physical timeline.

Unseen64: Preservation is an important aspect of any museum. How are computers, consoles, games, etc. stored and maintained at the National Videogame Museum? How to let visitors to enjoy and play with old games, without risking to damaging those artifacts?
NVG: Everything at the museum is fixable or replaceable. We want guests to come in and get their hands on our games, consoles, etc. This is a very interactive museum and we're allowing guests to play as much as they can.

Unseen64: How are pieces for the museum obtained? Do you collaborate with publishers, gaming studios and other videogames collectors?
NVG: Most of the items have come from our personal collections. A handful have been donated by fans and friends.

Unseen64: Does the National Videogame Museum contain any unreleased or prototype consoles, games or accessories? If so, could you tell us what they are and how they were obtained? If not, would the museum be open in the future to taking them in?
NVG: Yes, the museum has a few prototypes including:
The only Sega Neptune prototype,
the unreleased Barbie edition for the Nintendo Game Boy Pocket system,
the Atari Mindlink controller (one of only two in the world),
the ultra-rare RDI Halcyon laserdisc-based game console,
the Nintendo World Championships cartridge from 1990

Unseen64: Do you receive any aid from traditional museums or the Texas government? How do you interact with other artistic and historical organizations to find support for your researches?
NVG: We have received aid from the City of Frisco. They are our main financial sponsor to turning this idea for a videogame museum into a reality.

Unseen64: While it's already difficult to preserve old (and new) videogames that were officially published to the market, there is a whole world of cancelled projects that never seen the light of day and could be easily lost forever. What can be learned from an unreleased or unfinished game? What place do they have, generally speaking, in gaming history?
Sean Kelly: These early versions of games ("prototypes" as we refer to them) have been one of our top priorities for decades. These games offer unmatched insight into the development of a

game and sometimes explanations as to why a game was cancelled. In the case of games that were eventually released, they allow us to follow the development of the game and watch it unfold into what the final product eventually became. They are a hard-copy of the "story" of the games progression even if the developers can't be found to tell that story. Where cancelled or unreleased games are concerned, prototypes often tell the story why the game wasn't released. Playing some of them it's fairly obvious that the gameplay or even the concept itself is flawed and the final product likely would not have been up-to-par. Sometimes, however, prototypes bring more questions than answers. Those are the fun ones where we get to investigate what happened!

Unseen64: Preserving history and art is often tough and grueling work, but every historian has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your experience founding the National Videogame Museum?

Sean Kelly: The path leading up to founding the museum is much more laden with funny stories than the opening of the museum itself but I'll tell one of the earlier stories that most people get a kick out of. Over the past fifteen years, we have been doing traveling exhibits at videogame industry tradeshows all over the country. We've done E3, PAX South, PAX East, SXSW, Game Developer's Conference, among others. In 2012 we did a pretty small exhibit at a show in Las Vegas called DICE. It was the first time we had ever done DICE so we really didn't know what to expect but we knew the majority of the attendees were industry higher-ups and we were looking forward to meeting some of these people. This exhibit was attended by myself and my partner John. John and I are probably the least well-versed in modern gaming whereas our third partner Joe is much more up-to-speed with the current generation. Like I said, our exhibit at DICE was pretty small and we were actually tucked-away in a room off the beaten path a bit so traffic in there wasn't quite what we'd hoped. At some point over the course of the show, "some guy" got really excited about our exhibit. He talked to John about it for quite a while and told John that we should get together to push the plan for the physical museum forward. One thing to keep in mind here is that we have had this exact same conversation with "some guy" at just about every show we've done an exhibit at. There's always someone who has a great idea and all kinds of cash and wants to help us out but it NEVER pans out. So at the D.I.C.E. Summit (when we had this conversation yet again, we kind of brushed it off and went about our business without getting too excited about it. After the show we reached-out to this person and he responded right away telling us we needed to come down to Texas to see what he had in mind. This time, "some guy" was Randy Pitchford, President of Gearbox Software! Randy had been building a collection of his own and he wanted to make sure that "someone" did a proper videogame museum. He was in the process of moving his company from Plano to Frisco and said we would love it in Frisco - he was right!

Unseen64: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time!

Tim Williams

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career Tim Williams has worked at Virgin Interactive, Shiny Entertainment, Planet Moon Studios, Ubisoft and Telltale on such classic titles as MDK, Giants: Citizen Kabuto, Armed and Dangerous and on such lost games as Propaganda (Playstation), Greed and My Amazing Story (Xbox 360).

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Tim: I've been in the game industry for over 20 years, working as a Designer, Writer and Creative Director mainly in California, although I recently spent 3 years in France working on a game. More recently I've been working as a Writer on Minecraft: Story Mode at Telltale. It's been a lot of fun as well as a big change because we release games pretty frequently compared to my console games of the past. It's also allowed me to delve further into interactive storytelling, which is something I'm very interested in.

Luca: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Tim: Going way back, I have very fond memories of the first Ultima games, and then moving forward I'd say I had a lot of fun playing Ocarina of Time, Tribes, Golden Eye, the Call of Duty games. And more recently I've been playing Clash of Clans, Clash Royale, and GTA V.

Luca: While at Burst Studios / Virgin Interactive you were working as Senior Designer on the cancelled Propaganda, can you tell us some more details about the game and why was it never completed?

Tim: Our initial idea with Propaganda was to make a car game unlike anything that had ever been seen. We wanted a 3D game where the player would be able to freely move about a city, going on various missions, with a strong storyline and cinematics. We wanted to try technology that was pretty new to video games at the time such as green screen. In many ways the intent was to create a game much like what GTA turned into. While at Virgin, I spent a lot of time with the artist, Bob Stevenson, working out how the game would look and play. It was a lot of fun, but probably too ambitious for the time.

Luca: Do you remember any other cancelled game in development at Virgin during those years? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Tim: Bob Stevenson, John Botti and I worked on an unreleased platform game called "Greed." It was basically like a game show set on an alien planet. You actually skydived down to the planet from a space station and start battling your way through while collecting as much money as you could. It was quiet absurdist, with aliens splatting and then leaving behind a briefcase that suddenly popped open, revealing stacks of cash. We really wanted it to be over-the-top and funny. We even tried out rotoscoping, filming stunt men at a Hollywood studio and putting them into the game for an extra layer of realism.

Luca: In 1997 MDK was one of the best games released for PC and Playstation: what do

you remember about its development, how was to create the first 3D game by Shiny Entertainment? Was there anything that had to be cut or heavily changed in the final version?
Tim: MDK was one of the smoothest and most enjoyable development experience I've ever had. It was a lot of hard work, but I was making it with some of my best friends. There were only 6 of us, so there was great communication and everyone was on the same page. We also moved very fast. If there was a slightly crazy idea, like freefalling onto a planet, which is how MDK starts, we got a prototype up and running pretty fast and then developed it from there. It was also very much my sense of humor, so if I came up with a funny idea, we simply put it in there. In fact, I remember one Saturday morning having a big laugh around a kitchen table with 2 of my teammates (Bob Stevenson and Nick Bruty), and essentially that morning is where some of the best comic ideas came from. I felt confident with the game as we were making it because I knew it would look amazing, we were innovating it just the right places, and it had a lot of character. I also knew how dedicated we all were to truly making it great. This wasn't a job for us, it was a passion.

Luca: Do you remember any cancelled game in development at Shiny Entertainment during those years? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?
Tim: Sorry, I can't think of any.

Luca: You worked for almost 12 years at Planet Moon Studios, a talented team that developed such cult-classics as Giants: Citizen Kabuto and Armed and Dangerous as their first two released projects. Both titles were acclaimed by gamers and the press at the time, but it seems that they did not sell as much as they deserved. What did the team feel at the time? Were sales enough to justify all the effort and creativity put in such great projects? It seems that after a while Planet Moon had to stop working on original games and to survive they accepted to develop tie-in games and casual titles, before to close down in 2011.
Tim: We had a lot of positive feedback from many people, both in the game industry and out, but I think we were disappointed that sales weren't better. Giants was quite late, so I think that affected things, and Armed and Dangerous was about half the game I had designed, so that was always in the back of my mind. Originally it was meant to have your wing men in scripted sequences playing out around you, and which you could affect in different ways. So you might be laying down cover as your partner ran to a door and planted dynamite on it, or vice versa. I remember I wanted a kind of 3D Frontline and Ikari Warriors (arcade games from WAY back) feel to it, where you're blasting your way forward, using whatever you can find. We even had our version of a tank you could shoot up and take over, then blast your way through heavily defended areas. We also wanted a game where it would look really beautiful, and then you'd get to destroy the whole landscape, blasting huge numbers of enemies and seeing them fly through the air. Thinking about it now, I wanted this same thing back in MDK as well - in the bombing run you'd see aliens exploding up towards you. Anyway, we managed to get some of that into A&D, but nowhere near as much as I wanted. Like with Giants: Citizen Kabuto, I wrote all the cutscenes in A&D, which was a lot of fun, but stressful because I was also designing the game. I always loved coming up with truly original and innovative ideas, as well as getting my comedy into our games, so when Planet Moon started moving away from that it didn't really feel the same. But I am hugely proud of the talented team we build up while retaining our sense of fun. I think we all share so many fond memories of that place.

Luca: Armed and Dangerous had some of the crazier and most original weapons ever: the "Land Shark Gun", the "Topsy Turvy Bomb" or the "world's smallest black hole" are still remembered and loved by those who played the game. How were such eccentric weapons conceived? Were there any other over-the-top weapons that were conceptualized, but then cut from the final game?
Tim: Well, if you look at some of the weapons I came up with in MDK (World's Most Interesting Bomb and the World's Smallest Nuclear Explosion) I think it's not that surprising to see similar weapons in A&D. I was always looking for weapons that would make people say, WTF, and then want to tell others about it. My original idea for the Shark Gun was something called "The Rabbiter," which would fire off several killer bunnies. They'd burrow through the ground towards the enemy, then spring onto him. We later made this more dramatic by switching the bunnies for a shark! The Topsy Turvy Bomb came about because of a bug. I was playing the game when all of

a sudden the screen started turning until it was almost upside down. I sat there staring at it for a minute, and suddenly the idea popped into my head: What if you drilled something into the ground and held onto it as the whole world turned upside down. Then you'd be hanging there at the top of the screen while all the enemies dropped off the bottom. Then the screen would correct itself and all the enemies would drop out of the sky and splat on the ground around you. An absolutely nuts idea, but this was Planet Moon, so we made it happen! One idea that, probably rightly, never happened was the "La-La Bomb." It would send an enemy into "La La Land" where you'd see them in a cloud above the battlefield rocking back and forth on a rocking horse, and then they'd explode.

Luca: Do you remember any cancelled game in development at Planet Moon Studios during those years? If so, can you share some details about what it could have been?

Tim: We started having "pitch-a-thons" as we started to hire more people, so there were many many potential games, but one that actually went into development was this unreleased game that was a return to what we were doing with MDK, Giants and Armed & Dangerous in terms of innovation and wow-factor. Unfortunately, I doing think I'm at liberty to talk about it, but there are some great ideas in there, and I'm even seeing some of them turn up on popular iPhone apps. I noticed Engadget posted about it awhile back: www.engadget.com/2011/04/28/planet-moon-artist-shows-off-unreleased-kinect-adventure-game-m/

Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your long experience in creating games?

Tim: Oh, there were so many because we would party a lot. Maybe this is because in the early days most of our small team was British, me included, so we'd often go down to the local bar or restaurant to chat over ideas. I remember that trips to E3 often ended with hardly any sleep. One such time, after a few too many drinks, we (for no particular reason)decided to reenact the part of the Matrix where Neo dodges bullets in slow motion. So we had one person playing the part of Neo, 2 people holding onto him so he could lean back in slow motion, another person to fire the invisible gun, another to carry the invisible bullet in slow motion towards Neo, another to spin a Coke can that got "accidentally" hit by the bullet, and bizarrely, another to hold the invisible movie camera, filming the whole thing... Anyway, I think you get the picture. This went on for at least an hour with us seriously perfecting this idiocy. Trouble is, this was right in front of the elevators in our hotel, so whenever the doors would open, people were scared because they didn't have a clue what was going on. It fact, it probably looked very much like we were mugging someone.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Tim!

Omar Cornut

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

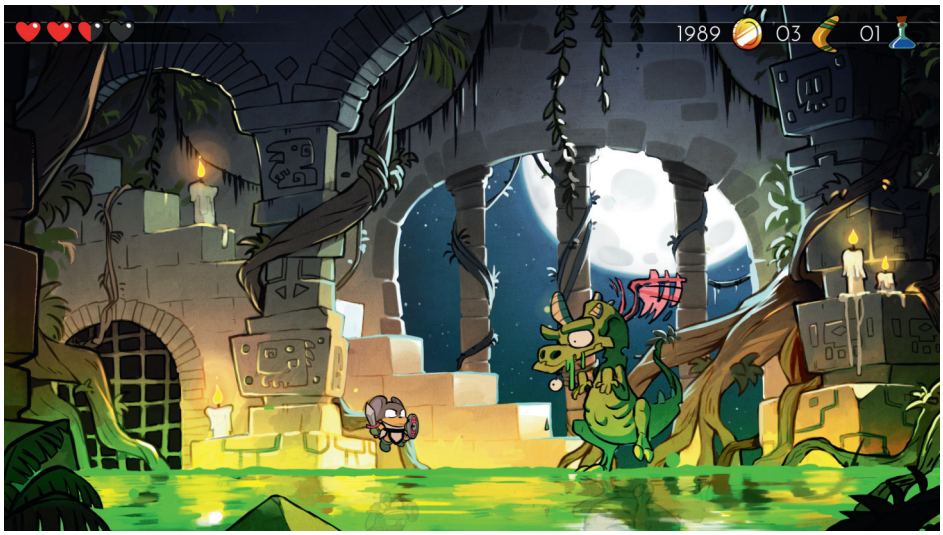
During his career Omar Cornut has worked at In Utero, Mekensleep, Q-Games, Media Molecule and Lizardcube on such games as Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles, Soul Bubbles, PixelJunk Shooter, Tearaway, Dreams and the official remake of Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap.

Luca: First we would like to thank you for your time :) To start this interview, we would like to ask you to briefly introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know about your career in the gaming industry, how you started and what are you working on today.

Omar: Hi Luca and thanks for having me! My name is Omar Cornut, in the retrogaming scene I am perhaps best known as Bock and started SMS Power which deals with anything Sega 8-bit related. Started programming as a hobby as a teenager, which led me to release the MEKA emulator in 1998. I've been professionally working as a game programmer since, in France, in Japan, in the UK. Recently I have founded a small studio called Lizardcube in Paris, where we are making an official remake of Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap (also known as Dragon's Curse/Adventure Island on the PC Engine).

Luca: The Dragon's Trap (Master System, PC Engine, Game Gear) is for sure one of the best chapters in the Wonder Boy series and thanks to the remake you are working on at Lizardcube a new generation of gamers will finally enjoy this cult classic with a new hand-drawn graphic style: why did you choose to remake The Dragon's Trap and how were you able to gain the license? (We are glad that the "Smoking Pig Shopkeeper" will still be in this remake, after he was removed from the Game Gear version!)

Omar: The Dragon's Trap is one of my favorite game too. One can easily guess from the fact that I called my emulator Meka and I run around on SmsPower under the name Bock.. I think it is such a marvellous game that really needs to get into the hands of all those poor kids who only owned Nintendo systems ;) We contacted Ryuichi Nishizawa of Westone early in 2014 stating our intent to make the game and he was supportive from the beginning. They with LAT who owns the Westone assets also helped us secure a deal for the Trademark which involved Sega. It was a very very long process. Originally my own plan was to not bother with the name, because I felt it would be too complicated. But I'm sort of glad we pushed through it too.. Our publisher DotEmu really helped with that as well. I'm working with Ben Fiquet who has been hand drawing and animating the entire game himself, in a classical fashion. We will also have a fantastic soundtrack arranged by Michael Geyre and recorded with dozen of instrumentalists, based on Shinichi Sakamoto's original, and sound design by Romain Gauthier.



Luca: Do you have access to the original The Dragon's Trap design doc or game files to develop the remake? If so, did you find any interesting feature that was planned for the original game but not implemented into the final version? And... do you plan to add anything new to the remake?

Omar: Unfortunately there was no design documentation or key artwork made for the game! When we asked Nishizawa-san, he told us that at the game they directly created the pixel art within the game, and only at the time of the release they would draw stuff for the manual, etc. Similarly, he had an overall design plan but it was kept and evolved in the team's mind more than on paper. I initially spent months reverse engineering the game ROM to study the engine because I wanted to find unknown secrets in the game. Eventually Nishizawa-san managed to find the original source code (in Z80 assembly, commented in Japanese) and sent it to me, so that made the second half of my work easier. There's a few comments here and there and some interesting intent can sometimes be inferred from the code, but it didn't seem to have many unknown secret. What I was most surprised to learn was how when using a potion, the amount of refill isn't actually completely random, but depend on the player mashing the joypad buttons. That was in the game all along but I never knew about it before I studied the game code very closely. On adding new things to the remake.. Maybe! So far we haven't started doing that. We are entirely focused on making the remake great and complete first. When we are done we will look into what we can possibly add to the game. But it such a complete package already that I'm not sure we can add something worthwhile to it.. Stay tuned! We will definitively rebalance some of the things like reduce charm stone grinding and adjust the difficulty in the Japanese temple.

Luca: Could there be any chance to also work on a remake for Westone's unreleased Clockwork Aquario after The Dragon's Trap will be completed?

Omar: It is too early to consider any other projects, but I am definitively super curious about Aquario! I remember reading somewhere that M2 was looking at it and those guys would definitely do an amazing job if they were to do it. The way they created a System-16 version of Fantasy Zone II was nothing short of amazing.

Luca: Working at In Utero in 1999 on one of the last Dreamcast games ever released (Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles) sounds like an interesting time to be in: do you remember any other In Utero projects that were in development while you were working in there, but that were never completed? There are not much info available on them, it seems that they closed down a couple of years later, after releasing "Jekyll & Hyde" and "The Shadow of Zorro" for PC / PS2.

Omar: I was the young intern there, on and off for a total of only 8 months so I wouldn't know everything about what happened at In Utero! The initial main target was Dreamcast but as the game slipped it and Dreamcast was discontinued it became quite a struggle for the team to pull it off, however they did in the end! The Dreamcast version unfortunately had a few issues, they had to cut quite a few enemies, and it had this problem where voices would cut the music, because the engine couldn't stream two audio tracks simultaneously. That bit was quite unfortunate as the music by Bertrand Eluerd (rip) were really good! Go check them out on Bandcamp! It is possible that at least Jekyll & Hyde had a build running on the Dreamcast, as the games were all using the same engine, but I don't think they ever pushed for that. Jekyll & Hyde was developed alongside Evil Twin. Shadow of Zorro was developed later and I don't know much about it. When I came back to In Utero in summer 2000 I prototyped and created 4 games for the Visual Memory Unit, which you can now find on my website. They eventually weren't included in Evil Twin, presumably because adding VM games would incur lots of UI changes and extra technical requirements with game submission.. At a time when the game was already late it made sense to cut them off. I however was allowed to publish them separately. Near the end of the company they started designing and prototype what would become Evil Twin 2, with an older character manipulating a stick. After the company closed Diego, Nino and Cedric from In Utero formed their studio Fandango working on a PSP game called Carnival: Theorem One which I think was inspired by those early Evil Twin 2 design. The game unfortunately was not finished.

Luca: Mekensleep was the team behind one of the best DS games that probably most people never played: Soul Bubbles. Unfortunately it seems that the game did not sell

enough, but was this the reason why the team had to close down? What do you remember about that time? Is the studio really dead or could it be back one day?
Omar: It was quite frustrating for us that after 4 years the game didn't sell well. I think at the time we just had different desires. Ben had already left to pursue making animation, and I wanted to work in Japan, etc. At the time I became a little frustrated of being the lead programmer on Soul Bubbles: I wanted to go to a team where I would be the less experienced person and learn from others. Unfortunately I never achieved this dream of finding a master senpai :) but I still learned amazing amount of stuff from the teams at Q-Games and Media Molecule. In the end I learned that each of us within a team have different skills. We learn by working together. The company Mekensleep didn't close. Olivier the founder gathered a new team and they made a geolocalized game called Meatspace Invasion along with C4M. It didn't take off and had some technical issues at the time Apple changed the map API. Then went and tried different things. I think the company may be closed now..

Luca: After working on the Japanese version of Soul Bubbles (and an unreleased iOS version?), was there any other game in development at Mekensleep?
Omar: Olivier had several projects, there was Meatspace Invasion which was released, and some prototypes they made with Marc Planard. There was a game called Taxiwars which was also a geolocalized game involving taxi with cool weapons. I don't know what happened to that. And Marc prototyped a music game they wanted to make. Olivier was quite influenced by Flower and wanted to make something that had the same amount of beautiful.

Luca: How was your time working at Q-Games in Japan? The studio has a good relationship with Nintendo (Starfox Command, Starfox 64 3D, etc.) and Sony (PixelJunk Series, The Tomorrow Children, etc) and seems a great place to work in, with enough freedom to develop original concepts. While in there did you see any new pitch or feature that was "too original" or "too risky for the market" and had to be cut out?
Omar: They did a million things which weren't released. Unfortunately Japanese companies are quite strict and I probably can't talk about them in details. I'm pretty sure they had at least one 100% complete DS game that went unreleased, and many cool DSi prototypes. They still managed to release three amazing DSi titles. Starship Defence, X-Returns, Trajectile were all very good games. When you aim for quality you have to drop a lot of ideas. It's never really about being "too risky for the market", at least not in that sort of studio, but sometimes even though we have what seems like a great idea it is hard to get the gameplay to gel. It can be frustrating, because many dropped prototypes looked super pretty and promising.

Luca: Tearaway is another gem for PSVita that seems to have not received all the love it deserve. While the final game was beautiful and lots of fun, do you remember anything major that was cut or heavily changed? It seems that originally the game was meant to be an open world adventure titled "Sandpit".
Omar: The game changed so much during development. There's a good article on Polygon (polygon.com/features/2013/11/18/5056096/making-tearaway) that discusses some of those early iterations so it would be redundant for me to talk about it here. But even once we settled on the game direction, we kept making changes until the end. If you have played the final game and look at our announce video, you'll be surprised to notice that pretty much NONE of the scene from that announce video are left in the final game. The announce video showed some gyro features

that we dropped because they weren't good enough. There was a silly megaphone thing in the announce video showing Michelle yelling at the microphone. We thought it was fun but obviously everybody on the internet hated the idea. Sandpit came from the name of the small room where the original core team was crammed. When I joined it it was Rex, Paul, Nathan and Men-Lu in a small room. The directors of MM told us we could do any game we wanted. Rex looked at the Vita and immediately had this silly idea of having a finger character we could control with the back-touch. It evolved into that final story where both the papercraft character and you as the player shared a bond. So the codename was Sandpit for a while, then Uncovery, because the game was then about uncovering part of the real world.

Luca: As most of the Unseen64 Staff is italian, we just LOVE to eat good food :) What is your favorite food ever? Any secret recipe that you would like to share with us?
Omar: I like roasting a big eggplant directly over fire (if your kitchen uses gas) and letting it cook here almost to the point where it gets on fire. Then you open it and extract the inside which you can mash. It tastes all smokey, much better than boiling it or cooking in the oven.

Luca: That was the last question, thanks again for your time!
Omar: Thanks for having us and keep up the good work with the site :)
Players can check our Wonder Boy III remake at TheDragonsTrap.com and we hope that you will like the game! You can also follow me on twitter @ocornut @lizardcube and Facebook Wonder Boy The Dragon's Trap / Lizardcube, etc.

Terry Greer

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Ross Sillifant

During his career Terry Greer has worked at Microprose, Kuju Entertainment, Ratbag Games and Blitz Games Studios on such lost games as Citizens (PC), XCom Alliance (PC), Unreal (Playstation), Battletech (PC), River Raid (PS2), Possession (Xbox 360) and many more. You can read a long series of interesting memories about these cancelled projects at Terry's website: www.terrygreer.com.

Unseen64: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

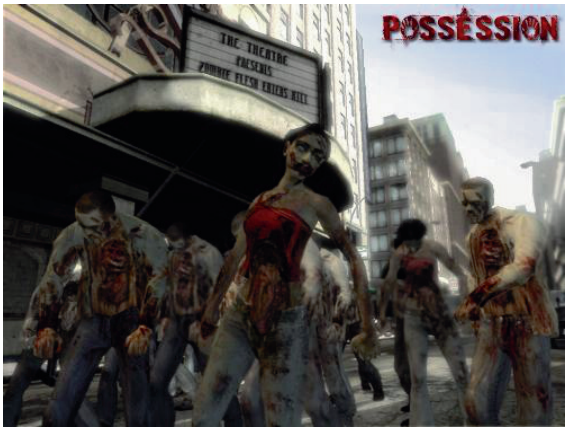
Terry: Well my name is Terry Greer - I've been in the game industry for just over 30 years. I started by creating sleeve covers for early spectrum/C64 games before getting into ingame graphics, animation and game design. I've worked for a fair number of UK companies over the years and there's a full breakdown on my website (www.terrygreer.com). When Blitz went into receivership i decided I'd had enough of commuting long distance to work so today I do a multitude of things. I've published an SF/fantasy novel (now available on Amazon). I'm working on my own indie game based around chess (Pawned!), and I've also started lecturing on game design and game art design at university.

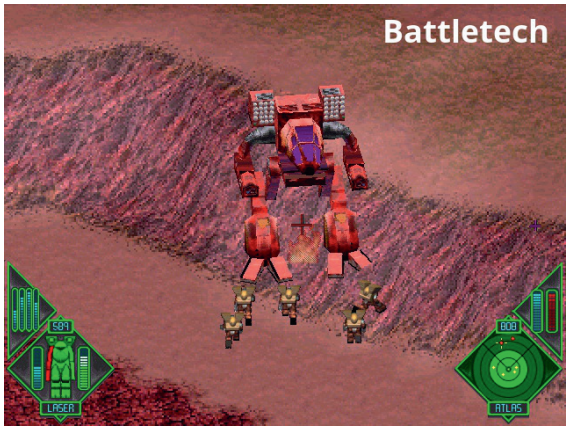
Unseen64: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Terry: I'll play most things, and like RPGs a great deal - but I don't go out of my way to play all of them. I just stick with a few I like. But I have a special fondness for certain classics. The original Red Alert series and Red alert 2 I consider the pinnacle of the RTS. I don't think anything since has the same level of approachability and clarity. XCom of course - and I've loved the reboot (mostly but with some caveats). Since leaving blitz I've largely gone back to PC gaming, but that should be remedied soon as I'm dying to try several titles unique to the PS4. Currently my main time sinks are FTL, Fallout 4 and Telltale's adventure games (currently Game of Thrones). But there's a big waiting list on my Steam account.

Unseen64: We were super happy when we found your site, in which you share many memories and documents from cancelled games you worked on (X-Com Alliance, Battletech, Citizens, Unreal PSX, River Raid, Possession..). It seems that you are well aware of the importance of videogame history and try your best to save what you can from projects that could be forgotten. How did you manage to save files from the old games you worked on? Was it just a coincidence as in finding some documents in old backups you made at the time or do you consciously preserved files to not lose those memories?

Terry: I tend to be hoarder and not throw much away. But it's not been organised in the past, which is why I've lost so much over the years via corrupted discs. I may have kept the disc, but it's become unreadable. But overall yes - I do agree that a lot of this stuff is being lost nowadays, and the move online to service-based games where players don't have physical copies compounds the problem hugely. Online games inb particular have a major problem in that they tend to change slowly over time. I recently played team fortress 2 again for the first time in ages, and was rather horrified by what it's become. But there's no way now it seems to pull it back to what it was





originally, and to play it in an original vanilla form (despite what the settings say), which is a shame. This is even more true of MMOs. I actually applaud the work of those that resurrect ancient classics on modern equipment and it's the only way that people can play many of these games now. Having said that, many older games are very difficult and unwieldy now, and coming at them from a modern perspective often lacks the fun that they had originally. However there are many elements of those games (such as manual record keeping and map making) that have more or less vanished from games today in favour of hand-holding and ingame solutions, and handled well they were immense fun, and could be again. It's largely through luck I've kept a lot of stuff rather than planning, if I'd been more careful I could have saved a whole lot more. The website was and is just a marker in the sand, and is really sort of 'I was here' statement. For the last decade I've largely worked behind the scenes, and not on specific game projects, so it's nice to reminisce as well. For a while I half-planned to pick up XCom myself, and tried to get Blitz to buy the license, but all to no effect, so I was really happy to see it revised.

Unseen64: As a veteran of the industry, how does it feel after a lot of hardwork and effort by you and your fellow team members, to see projects never get finished? Does it lead to a degree of cynicism or sometimes could they also be blessings in disguise, IE you were aware that despite your art being of a high standard, game itself for whatever reasons simply wasn't shaping up and had it been released would received a mauling at review / been ignored by the consumer at large?

Terry: It's always gutting. I've never forgiven Hasbro for the mess they created when they cancelled XCom Alliance. That burned for a long time, but you just have to let things go. All developers are a peculiar mix of cynicism and optimism (sometimes blinkered), you have to be to keep on working on a project for years. Though I've rarely been on a project where I though a game would get a mauling, it's fair to say that a lot of reviews are made out of ignorance of the problems and tradeoffs that were made to get a particular result. There's no real answer to this of course, as there's no real reason why a reviewer should be that knowledgeable, but sometimes a review seems to be totally missing the point. Many games however never make it even as far as being started. I spent many years in blitz's pitch department creating proposals for games (both original and aimed at specific IP holders). The chance of landing any specific pitch was normally low. So we'd spend anywhere from a few days to over a month creating a 'deck' (which comprised all the elements documents, mockups, examples, demos etc) with the full knowledge that it was unlikely to be picked up. The only way through it was to consider the actual creation of the pitch itself as a project whose success wasn't based on if we landed the project, but if it was done to the best of our ability. Blitz's pitches were generally regarded as amongst the best in the business and I know that many of them have been kept as best-practice examples of their type. We had a reasonable success rate in getting beyond the initial pitch to actual further discussions, but cost and timeframe often became problematic and we ultimately lost a lot of projects where the pitch actually initially succeeded. More galling is

when features that you just know would have been groundbreaking never see the light of day, or get attributed to other games. Though sometimes it's nice to just see a system used. For example one of Alliance's designers went onto another company creating a small-scale squad-based game and implemented a squad order and control scheme that was close to what Alliance would have had (and which I was particularly pleased with). But that's life.

Unseen64: How could developers help to save documents and memories from games they worked on? Do they have some kind of "duty" to preserve gaming history that could be lost?

Terry: I can't say yes to that, games are a commodity really. I don't think it should be forced on on the creators to maintain records and documentation. That's for the game industry's 'historians' to do. However, I think that companies have a duty not to get in the way of this, or claim false copyright to shut down this sort of archiving. But for that we need massive reform on copyright and patent laws, and a shakeup of how it's currently handled. And most certainly not the approach proposed in the US that makes it so that only those that can afford protection get it. I'm only sharing stuff from companies that have folded, are considered abandonware or which I know I own. However, some of the rights have undoubtedly been bought up over the years and it would be a minefield to track down who owned them now. So, I'm acutely aware that at anytime someone could ask me to take something down. Also sharing what might have been means that it's not all been to waste.

Unseen64: It seems that during your career you saw a lot of concepts that were never implemented into the final games and lots of projects that were canned in early development. From your experience, which is the percentage of released games in relation to all the proposed but unfinished ones? Which are the major reasons why some features are cut and some games are cancelled?

Terry: My experience isn't probably typical. Firstly I'm ignoring pitch concepts that don't get as far as initial funding, because they can't reasonably be called cancelled (and there are so many of them). I'd say that over half the games I've been involved with in some way or other have been cancelled for one reason or another. Over ambition is one of the main causes, and it's something I've also been guilty of doing in the past. The more new elements you have over a previous game the longer it will take, but the relationship isn't linear. Two new elements can be four times as difficult as one new one and so on. This can lead to levels being cut, mechanics being removed or replaced and characters eliminated, and of course to the cancellation of the game. I've worked on very few games that progressed as expected. XCom Terror from the Deep was one of those because it was largely a mod of the original game (without too many new features) and it was a walk in the park compared to most other games I've worked on. The other main reason is change of ownership, either directly if a new company comes in and takes over, or if a new producer from the client comes aboard. Both of these lead to significant reevaluation of the game. It's easier for a new producer or owner to cut something if they consider it even remotely risky. Cancel it and nobody knows if you make a wrong decision, allow it continue (and possibly fail) and your head is on the block. Every time there's significant move at the top of a company there's huge risk of cancellations.

Unseen64: Is there any lost game you worked on that is still not on your website? If so, can you share any details about what it could have been?

Terry: Oh - there are lots from the pitch days that will never see the light of day, most of which are aimed at specific IPs, or which may still be being worked on, so I won't say too much about those. There are also a couple in particular that I may put up one day, but I might also have a kickstarter

for them, so I can't say too much about them. When we did the Dune pitch for Paramount, we were also asked if we wanted to pitch for World War Z and Star Trek. Unfortunately the way they wanted us to self-fund the prototype for Dune put the kybosh on the deal (it's not practicable for a small work-for-hire studio to finance something like that), which meant we never put in a pitch for either of the other two film conversions. But I already knew exactly what I wanted to do for that pitch. I wanted a story not linked in to either the first or second film, where the player started off as a lowly redshirt. So the player would find out the story from that perspective, from hanging out with Kirk, Mcoy, Spock etc. as part of their security detail. The player would have had to impress and gain the respect of the enterprise bridge crew - and survive all the things that normally desptach redshirts. And it would give them the opportunity to interact with the rest of the enterprise and it's crew as well.

Unseen64: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories back from your time in so many different companies?

Terry: Catastrophic: There have been many disasters over the years. One that stands out to me was XCom Apocalypse. A hugely ambitious project. The artwork was based on concept art created by Tim White, which while good didn't scale well to the sizes and resolution then possible in svga graphics. The sprites looked awful. Even the human sprites were significantly compromised as the original 3ds animation files had been lost and only 16 colour compressed images remained. Which were then used for ingame sprites. But not being able to recolour them properly significantly reduced their final quality. I'm probably blind to disasters I've caused, but I'm sure there are a fair number of those as well, certainly there's a hell of a lot I'd do differently in hindsight. Funny: Probably the most bizarre was when I was working at microprose and was sent over to work on on Master of Orion 2 for a few weeks at simtec in Austin Texas. The wednesday's design and programming meetup used to take place at 'The Yellow Rose' which was a pole-dancing joint (with free food). Probably the strangest place to discuss game development I've ever been.

Unseen64: As most of the Unseen64 Staff is italian, we LOVE to eat good food :) What is your favorite food ever? Any secret recipe that you would like to share with us?

Terry: I love cooking and I love Tex mex stuff which I first really experience when i worked in Texas at Simtec (Microprose)

Stuffed deep fried chillies (poppers).

Ingredients

- Small chilies (not the blindingly hot ones - but certainly not mild ones)
- Cream cheese - Philadelphia or Roulle is ok - but anything goes.
- breadcrumbs
- flour
- beaten egg
- hot oil for deep frying
- salt and peper
- sour cream (as a dip a salasa and guacamole are also good)

Cut the chilies lengthwise (including the stalk) into two haves and remove the seeds. fill the halves with cream cheese and press down to make sure it's filled completely and has a smooth upper surface - slightly beveled up. Drench in flour to coat them fully Dip them into the beaten egg and then into breadcrumbs to make sure they're fully coated. Fry them in small batches in hot oil for just a minute or two until golden. Place them on a paper towel to drain.

Eat with the sour cream dip.

Unseen64: That was the last question, thanks a lot for your time Terry!

William (Bill) Anderson

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

During his career William (Bill) Anderson has worked at Virgin Interactive, Spectrum Holobyte, Alexandria, Oddworld Inhabitants, Namco, Capcom, Midway, Ready at Dawn Studios and Awaken Games on such lost games as Max Mayhem (Playstation), Myth (Playstation), Pac-Man Ghost Zone (Playstation), Maximo (N64), Clown Combat (Xbox 360, PS3, PC) and many more. You can check his website at awakengames.com

Luca: To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what you are working on today.

Bill: My name is Bill Anderson and I started out designing and programming video games way back in the early 1980's on the Atari 800 home computers, mainly doing shareware games and like many at the time hoping for a big break into mainstream game development. Then in 1991 I was hired by Virgin Games, a.k.a. Virgin Interactive Entertainment in Irvine California. I was the first game designer hired by Virgin Games and was the lead game play designer on Aladdin for the Sega Genesis (Game of the Year), Jungle Book, Cool Spot, Global Gladiators (Sega's 3rd Party Game of the Year), I was also responsible for kicking off a number of other game projects, along with training all the incoming designers at the time. I left Virgin Games after David Perry split off to form Shiny Entertainment and I was offered a design management position at Spectrum Holobyte in the bay area, but after a mass layoff when they merged with MicroPros I ended up at a small studio in central California that would become Oddworld Inhabitants, where I was recruited by Sherry McKenna and Lorne Lanning to create the game play designs for Abes Oddysee for the Sony Playstation. After working for Oddworld I ended up working as Manager of Design and Producer of Original Concepts for NAMCO, where I helped across a number of products before ending up over at CAPCOM. I was recruited to be the Senior Game Designer on Maximo Ghost to Glory. A few years later I would end up at Midway Home Entertainment, before another mass layoff would have me working over at Ready at Dawn Studios where I was responsible for creating the initial game play designs and player mechanics for Daxter for the Sony PSP. Later I would go on to work in the casual game market where I created the Game Party franchise for the Nintendo Wii, helped with Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection and many more casual titles, before deciding it was time to go independent. Now days I work through my own company Awaken Games, where I provide game designs and consulting services to game developers and publishers all over the world.

Luca: Can you name some of your favourite videogames? Have you been playing anything lately?

Bill: I've always been a fan of the Command and Conquer style games, dating way back when Westwood Studios came out with DUNE 2, but currently I had to pick up Day of the Tentacle (Remastered), for sometimes you can't beat the classics.

Luca: Alexandria Inc is a quite obscure team, they released just a couple of games for SNES and Genesis (Demolition Man, Izzy's Quest for the Olympic Rings) and had a few unreleased projects for the original Playstation, one of which was titled "Max Mayhem": what do you remember about it? What kind of game would it have been, why was it never released and how much was done before the cancellation?

Bill: Funny thing is, I was the designer of Izzy's Quest based on an oddball license US Gold had for the Olympics and I managed the design team at that company, but Max Mayhem really didn't get off the ground do to the owners of Alexandria literally being crushed under the weight of Oddworld Inhabitants being backed by the same venture capital company that owned them. We had done some cool concept art for Max Mayhem and were in the process of working on some level designs and 3D art when the studio went poof! I was looking to leave the company at the time, as I saw the storm clouds moving in, but when the owners of Oddworld found out they made me a great offer to work for them.

Luca: Did you also work on another cancelled Playstation game by Alexandria titled "Myth"? Do you remember any details about the game?
Bill: Haha, you've done your homework. Yes, for Max Mayhem and Myth were the two concepts the owners of Alexandria hoped would break them into next-gen console game development and to be honest, both of them would have been totally killer games. Myth, unlike Max Mayhem wasn't going to be the blood and gore shooter. Instead it was going to be a more artistic style of game, based in lush fantasy forest settings.

Luca: In early 1996 you became Manager of Design / Producer at Namco USA where you handled the transition of the studio from PC / Sega Saturn development to Sony Playstation and produced many new concepts for potential games. What do you remember about that time, was the Playstation already the main console to work for? Did the studio had any Saturn / PC games in development that were cancelled?
Bill: To be honest it was somewhat a confusing time for Namco, like a lot of developers, they didn't have a good handle on what the Sony Playstation could do and everyone was saying 2D was dead, so everything proposed had to be 3D. I don't recall about what Namco was doing on the Saturn, outside of maybe Cyber Sled, an arcade port from their arcade game. All I remember about that is it played terrible and I was told many times by the Director of R&D at the time to keep my designer hands off of it. It was an honest port from the arcade version and should have been redesigned for the more sophisticated console game players. My time there wasn't a happy one, for there was a lot of higher management infighting going on and I quickly found myself in the middle trying to play peacemaker between the company directors and the head of R&D. Eventually I was offered the position of Director of R&D, but I turned it down because it would have taken me away from what I enjoy most, designing games. In hindsight I should have taken the position, for the man they did hire for the position came in and through us a layoff party.

Luca: Can you tell us some details about those concepts you worked on at Namco USA, which ones were never developed / released and what kind of games could they have been?

Bill: Wow, you're really testing my memory now. Ok, when I came to Namco I was told by the company directors that they wanted 6 new game concepts and I could use any artist in R&D at the time to help, but all 6 had to be done in 3 months and 3 of them had to center around Pac Man. In some ways that was good news, for I had already started on one called Pac-Man Ghost Zone, which was going to be a spoof on Tron where a kid gets pulled into a Pac-Man machine and turned into a 3D Pac-Man in a world inspired by the insides of the arcade machine. I don't really recall much about the others, outside of one being a top-down adventure and the other a puzzle game. We also had an alien shooter game concept. In the end they directors decided to go with Pac-Man Ghost Zone as their first original product coming out of the studio, but first I had one big hurdle to deal with. Just before I arrived at Namco USA their legal team had spent two years coming up with a universal image guidelines and copyrights for how Pac-Man was to look. Well this all got tossed out the window when I showed up with a 3D game proposal. Their legal team wasn't happy with me for a few weeks after that, but they all came around to agree that for Pac-Man to move into the future then guidelines for how he was to look in 3D was going to be a must. Unfortunately Pac-Man Ghost Zone was another casualty of the new director of R&D coming in, it was the only canceled game that I know of. You can read more about the game at awakengames.com/?page_id=3266

Luca: In November 1997 you became Senior Game Designer at Capcom USA creating the first Maximo, originally planned as a Nintendo 64 game. Capcom of Japan shown to the press a new "Ghosts 'n Goblins" for the N64 just a year before (November 1996), but it was never released. Do you remember why Namco USA initially planned to develop Maximo for the N64? Did your "Maximo 64" had any connection with the lost Ghosts 'n

Goblins 64? Did you ever see anything from that japanese prototype? Was there any kind of Maximo prototype running on the N64 or was it just a design doc before to switch to the Playstation 2?

Bill: When I came to Capcom to develop Maximo the N64 was still the hot market, but Capcom USA only had one development team at the time and they were all working on Final Fight Revenge, which I was told would wrap up soon. Well soon doesn't mean the same thing in Japan I guess for FFR had a producer over here from Japan and he wasn't in any great hurry to finish the game. So it took a really long time to finally get a start date for the production and by then the N64 wasn't king anymore and I was asked to change all of my designs to Playstation. When I designed Maximo it was always intended as a 3D Ghouls 'n Ghost remake, despite Capcom Japan fighting me on the idea all the way, but no, I never saw any other newer Ghouls 'n Ghost games, outside of the original classics.

Luca: Your original idea for Maximo was to use a "realistic" style, but in the end the game was changed to a "cartoony" style at the request of Capcom Japan. Was any prototype of Maximo with the "realistic" style ever developed? Which are the ideas from the "Realistic Maximo" that were later adapted by Capcom Japan for Devil May Cry?

Bill: No, no prototype of a realistic Maximo was ever produced. Once we submitted the full game design document to Capcom Japan, along with the concept art we produced they pushed back and said that they wanted all of the realistic looking games to come out of Capcom Japan, so that's when we had to change the look and feel of the game. It was our intent to make a gritty and dark game from the start, so we were a bit ticked off when our producer rep from Japan showed up with a first playable demo of Devil May Cry, for it had the look and feel of what we had originally proposed. Oh well, none the less we ended up with a game more successful than even Capcom Japan had expected, so much so that they asked us to convert the game to Japanese first, so they could do a big launch of the game in Japan, before here in the US.

Luca: In 2002 you founded Eagle Claw Studios, to work on your own IP "Clown Combat", a comical FPS for PC, Xbox 360 and PS3 that unfortunately was canned when the studio lost funding. Can you tell us more about the project? How would have it been different from the usual FPS? Will we ever see the game again?

Bill: Clown Combat is still on my wish list for the future, fingers crossed and I'm still working on the design. The idea behind Clown Combat was to make a mainstream FPS game that was family friendly, where the clown characters were made of morphing clay and there for could do things way beyond realistic shooter games of today. It's a parody game that pokes fun at a lot of science fiction moves along the way, from Logan's Run to Star Wars and more. Currently I'm still working on game play designs and level designs for the game and with any luck we'll get it made still. If you want to know more about Clown Combat please go to clowncombat.com

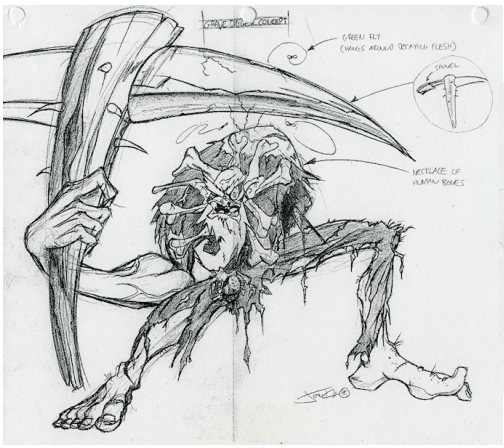
Luca: Do you remember any other interesting games or concepts that you worked on, but never released?

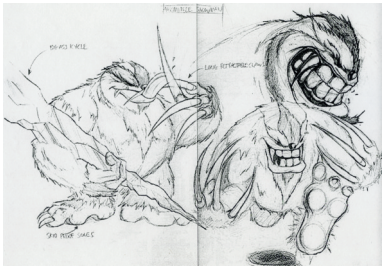
Bill: There were other games that never got finished... Star Trek - Project Star Fire a VR game designed by me for Spectrum HoloByte. Falcons Run an isometric F-16 game I designed for Spectrum HoloByte. Star Trek - Wars of the Klingon Empire, also an isometric shooter game for Spectrum HoloByte. After 30 plus years of game design you bet I've got a whole lot of game designs sitting around, and a number of them are already in the works. One being a drone game, another a C&C game and many more.

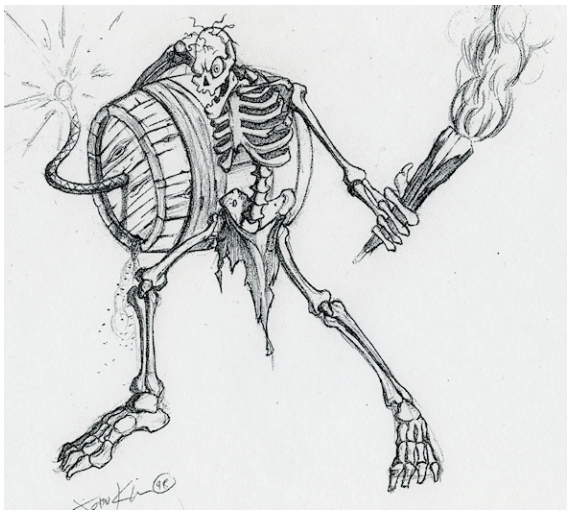
Luca: Working on videogames is often tough and grueling work, but every development team has both one catastrophic and one funny story (or at least bizarre). Do you remember any such stories from your long experience in creating games?

Bill: Oh boy, some strange and some tragic, but I guess the two that sticks out in my head the most is when a programmer at Virgin Games got really pissed off that the Director of R&D had given his programming assignment to another programmer in the studio. He ran to the director's office, smashed in the door saying "You hate me! You think my code is crap!" and ran out to his car crying, then started the car up and raced it at the building. Only the planter stopped his car from crashing through the window of the building. The second would have to be when the venture capital company locked the owners of Alexandria out of their own company with security guards posed at both entrances.

More concept arts from Maximo N64, thanks to Bill:







Scott Rogers

Interview by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma), Ross Sillifant

During his career Scott Rogers has worked at Alexandria, WaveQuest, Namco Hometek, Capcom, Sony, and THQ on such classic titles as Izzy's Quest for the Olympic Rings, Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee, God Of War, Maximo and on such lost games as The Head (SNES), Interplanetary Lizards of the Texas Ranger (Mega Drive), Crystal Castles, Virtual War (PC), Max Mayhem (Playstation), Pac-Man: Ghost Zone (Playstation) and Maximo 3 (Playstation 2).

Unseen64: First we would like to thank you for your time :) To start this interview, we would like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers: we'd love to know more about your career in the gaming industry and what are you working on today.
Scott: My name is Scott Rogers, I have been making video games for over 22 years. I am a video and tabletop game designer, I have been a creative manager for a major publisher and I am a former Disney Imagineer. I am an author who has written 2.5 books on game design (Level Up! and Swipe This!) and I have been teaching video game design for since 2009. I am currently working on several tabletop game designs including
- Rayguns and Rocketships
(boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/164147/rayguns-and-rocketships)
- Séance
(www.boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/177718/seance)
- Who's Hue?
(boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/181042/whos-hue)

Unseen64: Can you name some of your favorite videogames?
Scott: Gosh. I have so many favorite video games, I have to organize them by eras:
1980's – Donkey Kong, Sinistar, Star Castle, Dig Dug, Temple of Apshii,
1990's – Gunstar Heroes, Donkey Kong Country, Zombies Ate My Neighbors, Wing Commander Privateer, Curse of Monkey Island
2000's – Diablo II, LittleBigPlanet, Uncharted 2, Team Fortress 2, Call of Duty 4
2010's – Batman: Arkham City, Jetpack Joyride, Castle Doombad, The Walking Dead Season 1

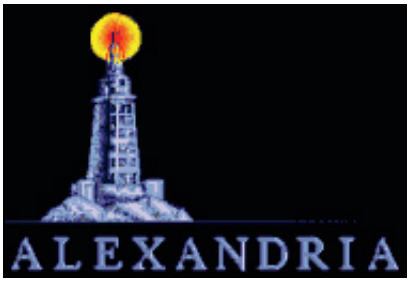
Unseen64: As a veteran of the industry, how does it feel after a lot of hardwork and effort by you and your fellow team members, to see projects never get finished? Does it lead to a degree of cynicism or sometimes could they also be blessings in disguise, IE you were aware that despite your art being of a high standard, game itself for whatever reasons simply wasn't shaping up and had it been released would received a mauling at review / been ignored by the consumer at large?
Scott: I've been pretty lucky to have most of the projects I've been involved with reach store shelves. In 22 years of game creation I can only think of six projects I was involved with that reached some form of production but were never finished.

Unseen64: From 1993 to 1994 you worked at Park Place Productions, a team that developed some popular sports game for Genesis and PC. It seems that at the end of 1993 the company collapsed, with publishers denying payments and dropping their projects. What do you remember about that time and was there any game that you were working on at Park Place, that was never released because of the situation?
Scott: The first game I worked on at Park Place was a side-scroller about a kid who rode a hoverboard and fought aliens. We never got past the pre-production stage of that game. However, all of the games that I was working on when Park Place went under were picked up by Sony Imagesoft and eventually released.

Unseen64: After Park Place Productions

was closed, you worked for a few months at Sony Imagesoft, did you develop any early Playstation project while in there?
Scott: I continued work on a couple of early Playstation sports titles: ESPN National Hockey Night and ESPN Baseball Tonight. Both games were released in 1994.

Unseen64: From 1994 to 1996 you worked as an artist at Alexandria Inc. a company that released some popular games for SNES and Genesis (Demolition Man, Izzy's Quest for the Olympic Rings) and had a few unreleased projects (as The Head and Interplanetary Lizards of the Texas Ranger): there are not many info available about this team and their games, what do you remember about Alexandria, how many people worked in there and what happened to the studio?



Scott: Alexandria was started by the Balthasar's – Ken Balthasar Sr. had been a key player in the early days of the Sega Genesis. His son Ken Jr. and a friend from college started the company with Dad acting as CEO. They were pretty successful for a while, creating SNES and Genesis titles. It was a good place to work, especially as a young professional. There were around 30 - 40 people working there IIRC. There were some really talented folks there – many who had very successful careers in other fields before they came to Alexandria – and many who became very good friends. The studio had trouble transitioning to the new technology and at the same time, Alexandria had been acquired by a cable company out of Colorado. This company also owned a share in Oddworld and much of the staff of Alexandria got funneled into Oddworld. There was in-fighting over this and eventually I think this contributed to the collapse of Alexandria.

Unseen64: Do you know anything about "Max Mayhem" and "Myth", two lost games by Alexandria planned for the original Playstation?
Scott: I did a lot of work on Max Mayhem. I drew concept art for the game and storyboarded much of the gameplay. Legendary Batman artist Neal Adams drew the main character for the game. It's too bad it never got into production. I don't remember much about Myth.

Unseen64: Did you ever see any work done on the planned Atari Jaguar CD version of Demolition Man? Sources so far seem to indicate the game's development only got as far as the FMV/Cinematic sequences being converted from the 3DO version to a format Jaguar CD could play, no actual game development ever started.
Scott: I was working on the SNES version of Demolition Man at the time, so I probably would have been involved in converting the game assets for the Jaguar version. I was a real whiz with Debabelizer during that time.

Unseen64: At Alexandria you worked on Atari Jaguar's version of Return Fire: how far along was the conversion? How do you think the Jaguar hardware compared to that of the 3DO? Why the conversion was abandoned?
Scott: The Jaguar was junk. It was supposedly hard to program for and the artwork couldn't look anywhere near as good as the 3DO version. In my humble opinion, it was a real dog of a console with one of the worst controllers ever created. The conversion was pretty close to being done at that point. We were also working on a conversation of the game "Frankenstein: Through the eyes of the monster" that also got canned.

Unseen64: Was it "tough" to have worked on a flagship title like Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee on Playstation, yet not received a credit for it? Is this a common practice in the industry itself?
Scott: It stung at the time, but to be honest, it was the best thing for my career. It forced me to decide to pursue a career in game design rather than stay an artist. I've only encountered one other situation like this where I was refused to be given proper credit for the work I did. I left that company too. Credits in games can get weird. Some people want to take credit for something they didn't do or had very little to do with. I believe that if it's on your business card, that's the credit you should receive. This is something the Writer's Guild of America does really well – credit

arbitration. The video game industry could really use a service like this.

Unseen64: In 1996 you worked for a few months at WaveQuest, a mysterious company that (as far as we know) only released 2 games, "Bronchie the Bronchiasaurus" and "Packy & Marlon" for SNES, then vanished forever. What do you remember about this team and did they ever created any more games?

Scott: WaveQuest was actually a pretty innovative company. They were the first to develop what are now known as "serious games" for the SNES and Genesis. If I remember correctly, their first two big hits were games that taught kids how to treat and maintain the use of insulin and a driving game that worked with a stationary bike. They were first into the healthy games market and were trying to branch out into more mainstream gaming when I came on-board. I worked on two designs: A re-make of the Atari game Crystal Castles and a massively sprawling top-down war-themed computer game called Virtual War. Virtual War had a great design and there were mechanics planned for it that I still haven't seen in any other game. I was in charge of maintaining the tech-tree and a humongous 600 page document. My time there was very short but it gave me the credit of "game designer" which helped me get my foot in the door at other companies.

Unseen64: You also worked as Associate Producer / Lead Game Designer / Writer for Namco Hometek during some of their best years, when many popular Namco games were released for the original Playstation. How was to work in such a great team, during one of their more prolific time? Was there any game that was cancelled?

Scott: My time at Namco was split into two phases. The first phase was very troubled. The original design of Pac-Man World was called Pac-Man: Ghost Zone. The production had big problems both with the design and the art. It just wasn't the right team for the project. We created a playable demo but it wasn't that great. We took it to Japan were it was shredded (and rightly so) by the Japanese creative team. As a result, most of the team was fired (save a programmer, an artist and myself) and new management was brought in. In this second phase, we quickly formed a new team and things took off. Some of my very best friends were on that team and despite poor studio management, we still make what I think is a pretty damn good game. It was successful enough to re-energize Namco's interest in Pac-Man (who had been ignored by Japan for many years) and I think the character is still riding high because of that renewed interest. Every time I see the 3D version of Pac-Man, I smile, because our team created that. I would have liked to have made more Pac-Man games, but the head of the studio pulled some dirty tricks on the team which led to myself and several others leaving the studio. What they say is true: that one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel.

Unseen64: We are huge fans of both Maximo games, you did a great work at Capcom Studio 8! How difficult you and the team found the PS2 hardware to develop for? (both Maximo looked fantastic!)

Scott: Maximo was already in development for at least a year when I came on-board. I had heard about it from the lead game designer was Bill Anderson, who was my game design mentor from Alexandria. It sounded really great and when I left Namco, he invited me to come on-board. I didn't have any problem developing for the PS2. We were using proprietary tools so I was digging into the code like the programmers were. Things came together pretty quickly. I agree that the game looks great – even to this day. Many outside observers thought that the art was done is Japan – which was high praise back in the late 90's/early 2000's – because it was so good. The art team on the Maximo games was one of my favorite art teams to work with. They "got" what we were going for and captured the feel of Matshushita's concept art beautifully.

Unseen64: Regarding the 1st Maximo, do you hindsight think perhaps the game stayed a little too true to Ghouls n Ghosts / Ghosts And Goblins in terms of difficulty, which perhaps put many people off and as a result sadly they missed out on the superb bosses and levels later on in the game?

Scott: Absolutely. No doubt about it, Maximo 1 is too damn hard. There are several mechanics

and systems in the first Maximo that are just downright unfair or cruel. (I'm looking at you Death Coin continue system) Some of those were NOT my idea (I'm still looking at you Death Coin continue system) but I was definitely still in my "designer vs. the player" phase of being a game designer. It's a phase you have to mature out of and many times it takes some game designers longer to grow out of it than others. When I finished the first design build of the game, it was actually much, much harder. The other team members complained about how hard it was. I called them babies and went back and did a second, easier pass of the game. Everyone ok'd this version, but we had ignored that at that moment in time, we were the world's best Maximo players. When the player got the game, they got pummeled by it, making for a very tough game. Now I know many people who love it because it is so damn hard. If you like that type of game, then give it a try. But I did learn something very important from Maximo 1 – the difference between difficult and challenging. After reading the reviews and feedback about the game, I went into Maximo 2 with a list of 50 things I would change about the game to make it more fun and fair for the players. I am proud to say 49 of them were implemented into the final game of Maximo 2.

Unseen64: Maximo 3 could have been the best episode in the series and it's unfortunate that it was canned because of low sales of Maximo 2. You were the Lead Designer for Maximo 3 too before to leave Capcom, and most of your leads for the project were developed into a short playable demo, before the cancellation. What kind of hopes you had for Maximo 3 and which were your inspirations for the project?
Scott: Maximo 3 was interesting case. David Siller, who is an amazing designer and great guy, was the head of the studio for Maximo 1 and 2. The Maximo franchise is his creation. After Maximo 2 was finished, he had been unfairly forced out of Capcom and the person who replaced him was not a game designer or much of a manager and frankly, an ass. He disrupted the team whenever possible and I believe he was responsible for the failure of the studio and the reason why we didn't make Maximo 3. Of course, the company line was that Maximo 2 didn't make enough money – even though it was a greatest hit – so the series was cancelled. All of that drama aside, there was an original design for Maximo 3 that was being developed to conclude the series. That game was called "Maximo and the Phantom Tower" and I think of it as the true ending to the series. The design of Maximo 3 which leaked out looks great and would still have been good, but I think that the team lost sight of what the players wanted – a spiritual successor to the Ghosts n' Goblins franchise. Looking back at the story and the design, we were too influenced by the events of 911 and the war in the Middle East in our design. There are still some cool things in that design, but I think the story didn't really go the direction it should have. So I'm torn. I'm would have loved to have made Maximo 3, but in a way, I'm glad we didn't make THAT game.

Unseen64: While you were still at Capcom Studio 8 did you ever had a chance to see DeVargas, another PS2 lost project from this great team? If so, what do you remember about it?
Scott: No, I think I was gone from Capcom by that time. I left the aforementioned head of the studio threatened my job. The writing was on the wall, I wasn't wanted there and so I moved on.

Unseen64: Having worked as Senior Game Designer on Sony's God Of War (PS2), a title which really showcased the power of the PS2, were you involved at all in playtesting? As despite looking utter gorgeous, there were a few frustrating QTE boss fights and the 'rotating blades of doom' type towers near the end (1 hit meant you fell back to start of section) did frustrate: how did you approach the balance between challenge and reward, for the player?
Scott: I was responsible for the first level of the game (the Hydra level), all of the boss fights and the "challenge of the Gods" – which was originally known as the "100 level dungeon". For all complaints about whirling blades and Underworld levels, please consult my pal, Tobin, who designed those levels and took great pleasure in the pain of the players. When I came on-board God of War, the game had been in development for something like 3 or 4 years. The team was seriously burning out and the game needed some re-invigoration. Dave Jaffe was gracious enough to assign me the first level of the game, which needed to start with a bang. The level went through many iterations, but thanks to the talent of the team, we managed to create a pretty classic starting level. The bosses were a different case. Some of them already existed when I got there and needed serious design work to make them playable. While you may find the QTE sequences frustrating, they were one of the hallmarks of the game and needed to be showcased

whenever possible. You have to admit, the QTE sequences allowed us to create some pretty epic and memorable moments in the game. Having come off of the lessons I learned from Maximo 2, God of War felt a bit like a set-back in thinking. The direction was that the game was to be "brutal" to the player, but I had learned that this shouldn't be the case. I remember the director telling me that the player "had to die at least 5 or 6 times" before they should learn how to defeat the boss. I strongly objected, saying that it was unfair to the player to punish them and that they would quit the game before they would learn how to win. I kind of felt like a Buddist Monk who had to team up with his ex-gunslinger partners for one last heist. It was part of the reason why I only stayed there a year. However, that team was probably the most talented team I ever worked with and they went on to do many amazing games.

Unseen64: You also worked for almost 7 year at THQ as Creative Manager on many games till 2011, about a year before they had to declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy and close down. From your experience at THQ, do you think that the current marked was just too difficult for them to survive? Was there anything that could have been done to let them being profitable again?

Scott: The market was pretty rough and no one quite knew what was going on. It was all over the place with mobile and console and indy games becoming popular. Everyone, not just THQ, was scrambling to understand the new reality of the gaming industry. However, I believe the decision to abandon the kid's game market – which had been their bread and butter for years – was a big contributor to why the company failed. Of course, this observation is made from the trenches. Who know what conversations were being made on the executive level.

Unseen64: Talking about all the games that you worked on and that were released in your career, do you remember anything major that had to be cut or changed from the final version? Is there anything that you wish it would have not changed, even if you were satisfied with the final product?

Scott: The robot boss in Pac-Man World was originally named "Clankity-Clank" – I was outvoted on that one. I still think that name is more charming.

Unseen64: In the last few years you wrote a few books on game design ("Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design" and "Swipe This! The Guide to Great Touch Game Design"), co-teach at the University of Southern California and New York Film Academy: what do you think of the new generations of game designers and what kind of games could we expect from future designer that will grow-up playing Minecraft and mobile games?

Scott: The new generation of game designers are taking game and game designs in a direction that few would have thought possible or reasonable back in the 90's. A game about throwing birds at pigs? A game about slicing fruit with a ninja sword? Games that have no endings to them? These concepts would have been called madness back then and yet they are some of the most successful games now. I am eagerly looking forward to what new gaming mechanics and paradigms these graduates will come up with!

Unseen64: Any thoughts on the re-emergence of Home VR? It along with motion control and 3D TV gaming were attempted in the past, dragged up years later, technology improved but sadly it seemed few if any lessons learnt from past mistakes.

Scott: As a teacher of video game history, I love showing students that we have all been here before in 1992 with systems like Jarod Lainer's "Eye-Phone" and the Virtuality system. They always seem so shocked to learn that VR didn't start with the Oculus. I have been saying "AR is for home, while VR is destination-based" While I find VR intriguing and have seen some absolutely amazing things done with it, I think home is not the right place for VR. I think it belongs in theme parks or dedicated play spaces much like the late and lamented Virtual World centers – locations where there is the space to create really immersive experiences that have physical components to them. There are several things missing from VR that I think are essential to good gaming – the social component, a slight physical component, the room to move around and feel like you are in a real space.

Unseen64: Well, that was the last question, thanks again for your time!

Personal Computer

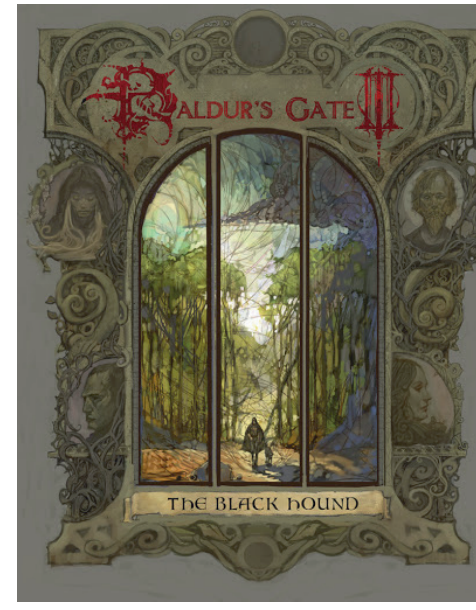
Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

To describe the PC gaming market is one of the most difficult tasks one could try to achieve. With its long history and multi-layered series of topics, from hardware evolution to digital distribution, the new wave of indie developers and cheap game bundles, in this book we can only give a light recap about what it means to play games on a personal computer. Once upon a time, computers were huge and expensive mainframes that only scientists, universities, governments or big industries were able to buy and manage. Luckily in the '80s computers became much smaller and cheaper, consumers started buying them for their homes to keep working on files while not at the office, and for personal use or to help their children learn something useful for their future. And behind word processing and learning software, soon computer games took their place in entertainment as another way of using those grey boxes just for fun. Hardware such as the Atari 800 and ST, Apple II, Commodore VIC-20 and 64, IBM PC, FM-7 and Towns, ZX Spectrum, MSX, NEC PC-88, C-98, Sharp X1, X68000 and Amstrad CPC were just a few of the popular brands owned by people from all around the world, in the early days of personal computers. Each of them had its own pro and cons, with more or less powerful tech, but even low res, janky 2D arcade games, RPG and text adventures were enjoyed as the most advanced interactive entertainment in those years. Such titles as Zork I (1980), Ultima (1981), King's Quest (1983), The Black Onyx (1984), Elite (1984), The Bard's Tale (1985), Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar (1985), Starglider (1986), Space Quest (1986), The Last Ninja (1987), Maniac Mansion (1987), Pool of Radiance (1988), SimCity (1989), Prince of Persia (1989) and Populous (1989) are some of the classic games that teens and adults played during that decade. In 1981 Microsoft released DOS as the operating system for IBM PCs and it soon became the standard interface for working and playing on a computer. To run a game in DOS was still not an easy task, as you had to type different commands to config and start a program, something that was not suited for younger kids. Computers were not intuitive to use and most games were played with keyboards (and sometimes with a mouse), characteristics that helped to shape the PC gaming market towards teens and adults. You had to be able to read, write, solve cryptic puzzles and organize complex strategies to enjoy the best games on PCs. After the American videogame crash in 1983, Nintendo were able to resurrect the console market by promoting their NES as a toy for kids, and even if adults played Super Mario Bros, Zelda and Duck Hunt too, the computer remained a more "serious" place for games. You could easily put your DuckTales cartridge in a NES, press start and have fun for just a few minutes, but to enjoy something like SimCity you had to know how to run it on a PC and invest hours to understand how to best manage an urban simulation. In the '90s the computer gaming market had its own set of characteristic and classic genres that cemented PCs as the ideal platform for simulations, point and click adventures, strategy titles and first person shooters. Those were the years with successful releases as Monkey Island (1990), Wing Commander (1990), Loom (1990), Sid Meier's Civilization (1991), Alone in the Dark (1992), Wolfenstein 3D (1992), Sam & Max Hit the Road (1993), Star Wars: X-Wing (1993), Master of Orion (1993) and Day of the Tentacle (1993). And then came Doom (1993), taking computer games to a new high for graphic, style, gameplay and multiplayer modes, starting the FPS craze in full. Doom also showed that a small indie studio could create a major hit: computers were (and still are) the main platform to develop games even without big budgets or support from a famous publisher. While to create games for consoles requires specific development kits, permits or contracts with the hardware manufacturers, computers are a free market where everyone with a great idea, time and talent can develop something good. Publishing games online in digital form became a new way to sell products without the need of traditional shops and distributors, sometimes by letting people to try the first few levels of a game for free and then shipping them the complete version by post (with companies like Apogee Software making lots of money following this system). However, it was still difficult to run games on a PC through DOS or similar operating systems, but in 1995 Microsoft released Windows 95: the life of users and developers became much easier. On PC people could play such games as Full Throttle (1995), Command & Conquer (1995), MechWarrior 2 (1995), Warcraft II (1995), Diablo (1996), Duke Nukem 3D (1996), The Elder Scrolls II: Daggerfall (1996), Age of Empires (1997), The Last Express (1997), Baldur's Gate (1998), StarCraft (1998), Grim Fandango (1998) and Roller Coaster Tycoon (1999). Another huge technical leap was made with the introduction of CD-ROM, giving more space for games that could use full motion videos with digitalized environments and characters. Games like The 7th Guest (1993), Star Wars: Rebel Assault (1993), Myst (1993) and Phantasmagoria (1995) would probably not have been created without the more capacious CD format. While the original Playstation, the Sega Saturn and Nintendo 64 allowed console gamers to play in new 3D worlds, with the arrival of advanced graphic processing units computers were also able to easily produce 3D games better than any console at the time. Titles like Quake (1996), Tomb Raider (1996), Carmageddon (1997), Half Life (1998) and Unreal (1998) made gamers want to buy expensive hardware to maximize graphics and have

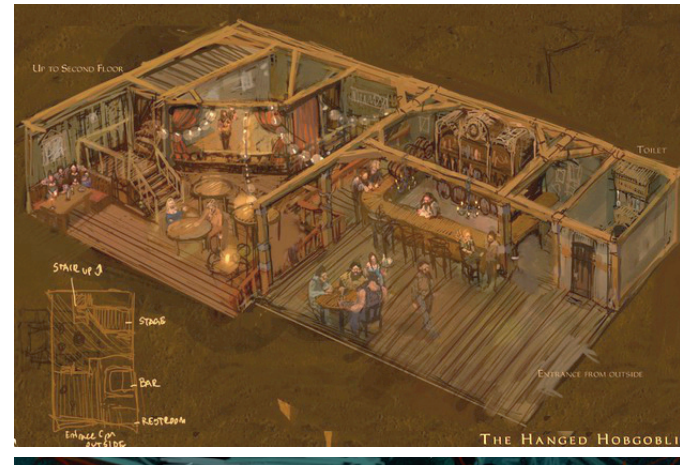
good frame rate. More and more PC games became cult hits, such as Fallout (1997), Dungeon Keeper (1997), Grand Prix Legends (1998), Thief (1998), Homeworld (1999), Outcast (1999), Planescape Torment (1999), System Shock 2 (1999), No One Lives Forever (2000) and The Sims (2000), while online multiplayer games found huge success with titles like Ultima Online (1997), Unreal Tournament (1999), Quake III Arena (1999), EverQuest (1999) and Tribes 2 (2001). Fan mods like Counter-Strike (1999) shown that independent developers with interesting ideas could also create a new popular title out of an existing product and at the same time PC games had the potential of getting infinite updates thanks to the fan community. While the 2000's were seen by most publishers as the decade of consoles games thanks to such successful products as the PS2, Xbox and GameCube, PC pleased us with such important titles like Diablo 2 (2000), Deus Ex (2000), Black & White (2001), Serious Sam (2001), Dark Age of Camelot (2001), Max Payne (2001), Neverwinter Nights (2002), Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos (2002), Battlefield 1942 (2002), The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind (2002) and Freelancer (2003). In 2003, Valve released the first beta version of Steam, initially as a way to easily patch games for developers and users, but it soon became a popular digital shop for AAA and indie games published on PC. Since the early 2000's, with the higher cost of development along with similar technical power of consoles and PCs, important games were released for all possible hardware, to maximize earnings and divide expenses. Even with a long list of great PC games, in the last 15 years there are not many PC exclusives from major publishers: Max Payne 2 (2003), Far Cry (2004), Doom 3 (2004), Half Life 2 (2004), F.E.A.R. (2005), Star Wars Battlefront II (2005), World of Warcraft (2005), The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (2006), Portal (2007), BioShock (2007), Crysis (2007), Team Fortress 2 (2007), Left 4 Dead (2008), Fallout 3 (2008), Borderlands (2009), Dragon Age: Origins (2009), Mass Effect 2 (2010), Assassin's Creed II (2010), Fallout: New Vegas (2010), StarCraft 2 (2010), Crysis 2 (2011), The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (2011), The Witcher 2 (2011), Borderlands 2 (2012), Diablo III (2012), Bioshock Infinite (2013), FarCry 4 (2014), Metal Gear Solid V (2015), The Witcher 3 (2015), Elite: Dangerous (2015) and so on. Is the PC market only a copy of what is released on consoles? No, that's far from the truth. PC is still the main platform for indie developers that can create original and experimental games, making them available to download online to a huge number of users... after all, who does not have a computer at home? One of the most successful videogames ever was initially conceived as a small indie project by a swedish programmer: Minecraft, released in December 2009 and now available on all consoles, smartphones and tablets. There are many development tools available on PC, easy to learn and cheap or even free to use. As it happened in the early days of personal computers, teens are learning how to make games and along with experienced developers there are more and more titles released every day on PC. Of course, most of them will never became popular and only a few will sell enough to permit their creators to make videogames their primary job, but it's easy to understand how today everyone can find something new and interesting to play on PC. Thanks to Steam, the new wave of indie devs found a viable platform to sell their creations and users are more inclined to buy something that will be listed in their Steam library. Digital games have found their right value, with Steam sales and indie bundles letting people own something only when the price is as cheap as they are willing to pay for. By comparison, traditional selling games through physical shops at full price sounds like a scene from a long lost era. We can only name a few of the countless number of popular and original PC games released by independent studios in the last decade: Garry's Mod (2006), World of Goo (2008), Audiosurf (2008), Machinarium (2009), League of Legends (2009), Braid (2009), Super Meat Boy (2010), VVVVVV (2010), Amnesia: The Dark Descent (2010), Terraria (2011), LIMBO (2011), The Binding of Isaac (2011), Bastion (2011), Dungeon Defenders (2011), FTL: Faster Than Light (2012), Dear Esther (2012), Hotline Miami (2012), Torchlight 2 (2012), Mark of the Ninja (2012), Thirty Flights of Loving (2012), FEZ (2013), DOTA 2 (2013), Antichamber (2013), The Stanley Parable (2013), SpeedRunners (2013), DayZ (2013), The Talos Principle (2014), Nidhogg (2014), Octodad (2014), Killing Floor 2 (2015), Pillars of Eternity (2015), Undertale (2015), Duck Game (2015), ARK: Survival Evolved (2015), Stardew Valley (2016) and many, many more. PC games sales are higher than ever and while we don't know how the market will be in the next decade, we can assume that PC will keep its lead for core gamers. In 2015 the number of digital games released on Steam doubled compared to 2014, with about 3.500 new digital titles. In the same year there were less than 1.000 retail and digital games published on PS4 and Xbox One (source: EEDAR Insights @ GDC16). With PC gamers expecting to pay less for games, with huge backlogs, free to play games and a wide selection of new titles to choose from, it's easy to see how developers will have to create original, high quality or offbeat products that resonate with the right public, to be able to stand out and sell enough. Since the early '80s, developing software for PC was simple enough for individuals and big studios, if you also keep in mind that most game making tools are used through PCs, it's easy to see how computers have the highest number of canceled projects that were once in development or just pitched. It would probably be impossible to archive all the unseen PC games that were once conceived (how many unreleased RPG Maker titles are forgotten away in old hard disks?) but at least we'd like to remember some of the most interesting ones, planned by talented studios from all around the world. In the following pages we'll see many canceled ambitious projects that could have become new PC classics, if not lost in the huge limbo of failed videogames.

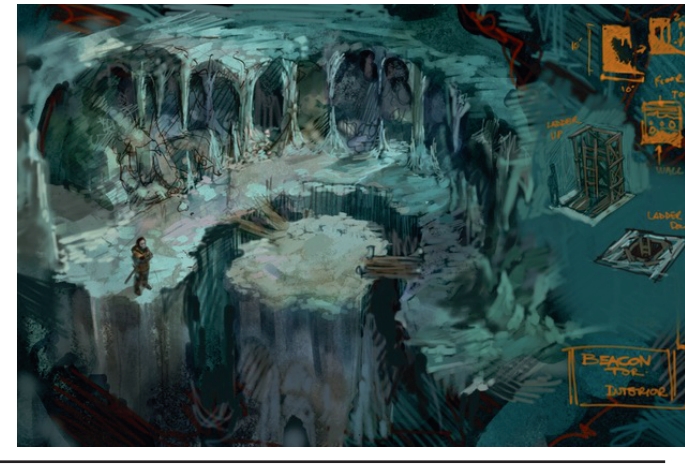
BALDUR'S GATE III: THE BLACK HOUND

Article by: Felipe Pepe



Black Isle Studios, a divison of Interplay, was an RPG power-house in the late 90's, being responsible for developing Fallout 1 & 2, Planescape: Torment and Icewind Dale 1 & 2, as well as publishing BioWare's Baldur's Gate games. Sadly, it also became known for its cancelled games, such as Torn, Stonekeep II, Fallout 3 "Van Buren" and, the subject of this article, The Black Hound. First announced in 2001 and commonly known as Baldur's Gate III: The Black Hound, the game actually bears no relation to the plot, location or characters of the previous Baldur's Gate game. It wouldn't even be developed by BioWare, or use the famous Infinity Engine. In fact, the name “Baldur’s Gate III” was a legal trick, as during its development Interplay lost the Dungeons & Dragons license to Atari but could still develop D&D games under the Baldur's Gate and Icewind Dale brands. Under code names like "FR6" and "Project Jefferson", The Black Hound began as its own game in late 2000, being developed by a small team as a side project. Full development would only begin in 2002, after Icewind Dale 2 was released. The team was led by Josh Sawyer, a History Major, and while it would still use the AD&D ruleset and be set in Forgotten Realms (like Baldur's Gate), it would be a more grounded, low-level adventure, with a heavier focus on role-playing. What is known of the original plot is that you would be set in the Dalelands region of Forgotten Realms. There you would create a new character - not a child of gods or special in any way - that would run into the eponymous black hound being fiercely hunted by a cleric named May Farrow. More than just a mere animal, the hound was a physical manifestation of her guilt for allowing her husband to die and then failing to properly resurrect him. She would kill the dog, but it's spirit would bound to you, allowing you to see and interact with the guilt of others. The cleric would then begin to hunt you as well, and the game would be centered on your journey to understand what happened to you, interacting with factions like the Archenriders, the Church of Lathander and the Red Wizards of Thay, until eventually confronting May Farrow's husband - now a powerful abomination which feeds from guilt. Not much is know about the gameplay, other than it would be based on the previous Infinity Engine games - with multiple party members are real-time-with-pause combat - but updated to the recently released D&D 3rd Edition ruleset. Karma would be a central part of the game, as players would be able to explore the game's world in a non-linear way, but would face the consequences of their actions, including failed and incomplete quests. To ensure this, a robust reputation system was





devised, which would track your relationship with individual factions and locations, as well as your overall fame/infamy. Thinking the Infinity Engine to be overused and inspired by the Aurora Engine that BioWare had developed for Neverwinter Nights, Black Isle decided to create a new engine as well, code named the Ferguson Engine. This new engine would be built from the ground with the D&D ruleset in mind and would allow for 3D character models, instead of Infinity Engine's sprites. Unfortunately, the only two games designed with said engine were The Black Hound and the original Fallout 3 (codenamed Van Buren), and both never saw the light of day. Still, a tech demo of Van Buren was leaked in 2007, allowing curious souls to play a bit and imagine how these games would feel. While there were plans for a full trilogy of games, The Black Hound was cancelled in 2003, reportedly about 80% complete, when Interplay lost the rights to the Baldur's Gate brand as well and could not release a D&D RPG anymore. Suffering from financial issues, Interplay would close the Black Isle Studios shortly after. However, that was not the end of The Black Hound. Black Isle Studios` former manager, Feargus Urquhart, gathered a few key developers, such as Josh Sawyer, Chris Avellone, Chris Parker, Darren Monahan and Chris Jones and founded a new studio: Obsidian Entertainment. Focused on RPGs, Obsidian would then develop titles such as Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic 2, Neverwinter Nights 2, Alpha Protocol, Fallout: New Vegas and Dungeon Siege 3. Neverwinter Nights 2 came with a toolset for creating modules and in 2007 Sawyer began using them to work on a personal project: a The Black Hound module. He posted about the project for a few years, sharing screenshots and discussing his views on mechanics such a damage resistance, feats and classes, but the module was never finished. Another attempt at resurrecting the game would occur in 2008, when Obsidian pitched Baldur's Gate III to Atari, holder of the Dungeons & Dragons license at the time. Negotiations went far and designers worked for months on the project, but Atari was suffering financially, didn't have the money required and the game was abandoned as well. In September 2012 Obsidian would crowdfund a spiritual successor the Infinity Engine games, a 2D isometric RPG titled Pillars of Eternity. The Kickstarter campaign was a success, raising $4,163,208 dollars, and the game was eventually released in March 2015 to critical acclaim. While Pillars of Eternity isn't The Black Hound nor uses the D&D ruleset, it has Josh Sawyer as its director and features many similarities, being a party-based RPG with real-time-with-pause combat system and sporting a distinct visual style that combines 2D backgrounds with 3D character models. It also featured a nice Easter Egg to the days of Black Isle Studios, with one of the cities featuring an inn named The Black Hound. Meanwhile, Trent Oster, a former BioWare employee, founded a company named Beamdog and developed enhanced editions of the Baldur's Gate and Icewind Dale games, adding features such as widescreen support and tablet ports. After the success of the re-releases, the company began working on Siege of Dragonspear, an expansion to Baldur's Gate, and mentioned many times their ambition of one day developing Baldur's Gate 3. While Oster stated that he wouldn't follow the original design for The Black Hound, it might still be the closest thing to that mythical game.

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CITADEL OF THE BLACK SUN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Citadel of the Black Sun is a cancelled RPG that was in development in 1988 / 1989 for DOS PC by Golden

Goblins, a team under Rainbow Arts, a less known developer and publisher founded in 1984 in Gütersloh, Germany. At the time Golden Goblins already worked on Grand Monster Slam, some kind of fantasy themed pong game released for Amiga, Commodore 64, Atari ST and PC, but they were asked to create a new role playing game for US based SSI (Strategic Simulations Inc), a company popular at the time for their wargames and titles based on the Dungeons & Dragons franchise. Rainbow Arts was the major publisher of SSI games in Germany and the two companies grew a great relationship that led them to work together on this new fantasy project: Citadel of the Black Sun. In late '80 computer RPGs were still in their early days, with some of the most popular ones being The Faery Tale Adventure (1987), Ultima V (1988), Drakkhen (1989) and Curse of the Azure Bonds (1989): the techs used to create such games left a lot to the player's imagination, using overhead 2D sprites or some kind of clunky first person visuals. With most PCs at the time not having dedicated video cards to create more advanced graphic, it was not possible for developers to offer a vast, 3D open world to explore like today with titles such as SKYRIM, Fallout 4 or The Witcher 3. The worlds of late '80 and early '90 Computer RPGs were made of 16 color palettes and visual tricks to give some kind of illusion of being in an immersive environment. These are the foundations from which Golden Goblins started to create their own role playing game. The team was composed of just a few developers and designers: Jurgen Dolassek (dungeon implementation), Andreas Gortz (dungeon implementation, game design, graphics), Frank Lenzer (dungeon implementation), Hartwig Nieder-Gassel (concept, game design, graphics), Heiko Schroder (programming) and Teut Widemann (concept and producer). Previously, most SSI RPGs used turn-based group combat so Golden Goblins followed the same kind of mechanics with manual or auto-combat, EXP and a LV-UP system, but moving forward with graphics, characters customization, world interaction and controls. They implemented a "Barbie Doll System" that was shown in-game on the characters' portraits. This displayed the different armor and weapons equipped (at that time most games just had static sprites). The game was drawn in a full-screen isometric scrolling graphic to give the illusion of depth and multi-dimensional movements. The extensive world map could be freely explored as in modern open world RPGs and you could go anywhere you please with no barriers or story-driven limits to find new cities and hidden places to enter in. The engine changed to a different screen only when entering in towns, dungeons and combat. While these images could look simple for today's standards, it would have been one of the best looking DOS games at the time. Many were the interesting and innovative features planned by Teut Widemann for Citadel of the Black Sun, such as a true "Line of Sight" and window / door functions on buildings. You were able to enter all houses and to look inside if you had line of sight, by opening a door or peeking through a window. It was also possible to jump out of a window from the second

floor of a building if you wanted to. Players could check wardrobes and chests to find new armor and weapons, talk to NPCs, trade items and interact with animals. The epic storyline would follow the traditional fantasy setting, with warriors, elves, dwarves, wizards, orcs, dragons, castles and dark dungeons. On the right side of the screen there was a menu bar with all the available actions and the game was fully playable with a mouse which is something exceptional when most games at the time were keyboard control only. When Golden Goblins and Rainbow Arts showed Citadel of the Black Sun to SSI they were blown away and immediately wanted to put it under the AD&D license, planning to use its new isometric engine for all their future RPGs. For a small, obscure German team it would have been a life-changing experience and the history of computer RPGs could have been much different, if only Citadel of the Black Sun would have not been cancelled. What happened? Widemann shared some of his memories in a post on his blog: "First one employee of our daughter companies we acquired called Time Warp moved into our offices as we closed down their offices. That guy wanted my job, always working to criticize mine. He said openly he wanted my job, he can do it better, and he hated RPG's. He didn't believe in them. Second I fell in love with the girlfriend of my best friend Bernard. Remember? He was one of the three of us managing Rainbow Arts. She and I came together and she split from Bernard, not good when you think the three of us had to work together on a daily basis. Story short: I left the company due to private reasons (due to my girlfriend, later my wife, we married in 1992, but she died of cancer in 2010) and that one guy took over all my projects. Within three months he split the development team, made sure SSI hated mine and the team's guts and the project was cancelled. Remember, he hated RPG's! The game was 70% finished." This was the end of an ambitious RPG by a now forgotten German team. It seems that Todd Porter, their first producer at SSI during early development (before Nicholas Beliaeff took over), was such a fan of Golden Goblins' game that when he left SSI for Origin he put many ideas and concepts from Citadel of the Black Sun into their game Knights of Legends. The remaining people at Golden Goblins then worked on "MUDS - Mean Ugly Dirty Sport" (1990, Amiga and DOS), but Rainbow Arts was later bought by Funsoft and then by THQ in 1999.

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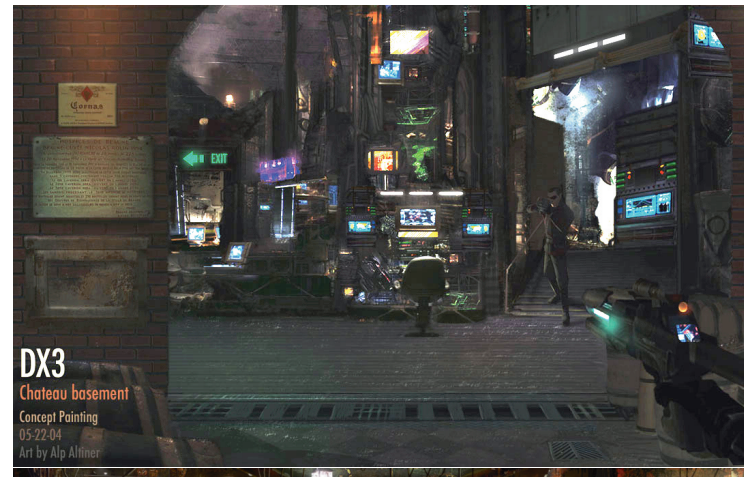
DEUS EX 3: INSURRECTION

Article by: Sam Batten

Deus Ex is a highly popular sci-fi first person action RPG set in a dystopian future on Earth. There are currently four games in the series: the first two were developed by Ion Storm, while the third and fourth games were developed by Eidos Montreal. However, it was Ion Storm who worked on two ultimately scrapped, alternative versions of the third installment, which were called Deus Ex: Insurrection and Deus Ex 3 respectively. Art Min was a programmer on the second game in the series Deus Ex: Invisible War on PC and Xbox, and as soon as development was finished on this he became project lead on Insurrection. There were at least four different storylines set out for this iteration of the game and many of the core concepts were thought out. In an initial design document submitted in February 2004, many of these concepts can be seen with the team vision for the game being to create an accessible and believable Deus Ex game with emotional depth and epic choices. It was slated to be released on both the Xbox and PC platform but what is interesting is, it is noted that a PS2 version would be made if an external team could be found to make it, and the "Xbox 2" for launch if green lighting was approved as soon as possible. At the time of writing this document, the team were in pre-

production and were ready to go to full production by July 1st, 2004, and it was written that they would have the game finished by January 2005. The game was to be based in 2027 and there were five superpowers in the world who would either rise or fall depending on the intelligence that you would give to them. The game setting was that America was falling into bankruptcy and the other rising superpowers like China and Russia were trying to utilise this and bankrolling insurgents on U.S. soil. The EU were also trying to bring the U.S. under the jurisdiction of international bodies like the UN. The U.S. was also split in two with patriots who want to keep the U.S. as it is and the globalists who want the EU control. Insurrection was to take place twenty years before the events of the original Deus Ex and you would play Blake Denton, the father of JC Denton who was the protagonist of the first Deus Ex game. It seemed that there would be many avenues that you could take during the game, and that the fate of the world would be made by your choices. The game would be open-ended and may have multiple outcomes depending on what you decide. Blake Denton was described to be "The six million dollar man meets 2020's Tom Clancy", a biomodified secret agent who was ahead of his time. Blake was to have a superhuman set of abilities such as enhanced speed, nightvision, invisibility and tissue regeneration. As a player you would be able to decide on where your allegiance would lie, with either the U.S. patriots or the EU globalists and this would dictate what would happen and the fate of the five superpowers ruling the world (China, the EU, Russia, Africa and America). The developers also wanted to bring the hard science of nanotechnology and its social implications, to make this more appealing to the player by having the game set in a near-future. By bringing the game closer to modern times and having large conspiracies in the game they were hoping to appeal to a broader market than just science fiction fans. Gameplay dynamics are of huge importance to Deus Ex and the developers wanted to make use of improved technologies to make this a new but recognizable experience for players. There were small tweaks that they wanted to make such as better AI, new combat tools and improved pacing of the combat. This would also be the first time that enemies would be able to use biomods which would increase the challenge of combat. There were also larger concepts that they wanted to implement into the game and make huge improvements on the previous series. Factions were used in the previous game and they would allow you to ally yourself with a specific one. In Invisible War, it was easy for the player to change factions and the developers wanted to change this. Once the player had joined a particular faction in Insurrection it would become extremely hard to convince other factions to let you work with them and it was described as a significant decision. There was also going to be a home base which would be a hub world where the player would go in between missions



and could store extra gear, equip new gear and heal. There would also be support characters that could be recruited throughout the game that would allow you to get special upgrades. They also wanted to vastly improve the dynamic lighting used in the previous game and better physics simulation. There is not much information on how they were going to do this but they obviously wanted to make their game more beautiful than the previous, an obvious choice. The concept document also goes into what the Insurrection team thought were the failings of the previous title Invisible War and why Insurrection would surpass it. They stated that they had analysed why the Invisible War would not meet its projected sales, and these were as following:

- The action shooter elements of the game did not live up to the mainstream shooter games.
- There was too much dialogue interrupting the game and resulting in slower paced gameplay.
- The story was not clear enough for players to get a clear direction.
- The game wasn't accessible enough to the mass market player.
- The user interface weapon/biomod inventory selection was too cluttered.

This allowed the team to pitch what improvements they were going to make and why Insurrection would be a much larger success than Invisible war. They wanted to alter the gameplay so that the combat would be more like Halo and Splinter Cell, the roleplaying elements would be similar to Knights of the Old Republic, stealth more like Metal Gear Solid 3 and the AI from Farcry. Streamlining the interface was also of importance to them so that it would be more accessible and simpler for players to use. Epic choices and emotional depth were a large part of what they wanted to concentrate on with less dialogue that was more concise and gave players clear objectives and an emotional connection, and creating binding factional alliances that would clarify the player position in the game. Insurrection was not only supposed to target previous Deus Ex players but also the GTA3, Halo, Knights of the old republic, Metal Gear Solid and the Splinter Cell audience. Min has said that Insurrection came to an end when Warren Spector left Ion Storm in 2004. Art Min left shortly after and they founded Junction Point Studios together in 2005. This was the end of the development of Deus Ex: Insurrection but it was not the end of development on a third Deus Ex game. Jordan Thomas (Lead Designer at Ion Storm for such games as Thief: Deadly Shadows) was already working on Deus Ex 3 while Insurrection was being developed and this is the game that they carried on developing after the departure of Warren Spector. Thomas's vision for Deus Ex 3 was a different one to any of the previous games and was to be an open world game set in New Orleans. It was still set to be a sequel but the player would be a failed biotech experiment and were forced to become a mercenary. The player would then perform missions for companies to become their mercenary of choice. Unfortunately most of this game was only ever conceptualised on paper and very little to none was ever put into an actual playable product. Eidos then closed the studio in 2005 due to financial difficulties and more staff leaving the company.

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ENGALUS

Article by: Felipe Pepe

Born in Germany to Turkish immigrants, brothers Cevat, Avni and Faruk Yerli were avid gamers. While in college they began to develop their own game engine (CrySpace), contacting other developers over the internet to share knowledge and experiences. Over time they gathered a team, and in 1999 they founded Crytek. In 2000, they took their new project - the CryEngine - to the E3 trade show and managed to impress NVIDIA with a highly advanced tech demo. NVIDIA licensed the demo to promote its new Geforce 3 graphics card, giving Crytek a spotlight amongst gamers and graphics enthusiasts. An ambitious team, the Yerli brothers went around trying to find funding for four distinct projects - X-iSLE (based on the tech demo set on a dinosaur island), Silent Space (a space combat game), Engalus (a sci-fi FPS) and a never-revealed fourth title - all aimed at a multi-platform releases on the PS2, Xbox, Dreamcast, GameCube and PC. Engalus began development in 1999 via a Crytek team organized through the internet. Brain J. Audette was a Half-Life modder still in college when he was contacted by Cevat Yerli to work as level designer on an FPS project with them, and was to be payed with royalties. Brian worked for two years on the project, eventually becoming Lead Designer. The game would be set in the 22nd century, 50 years after World War III. The player would slip into the shoes of Jordain, an assassin sent by the government to investigate a remote research space station controlled by a radical group known as the Invisible. An early story overview and dialog script were leaked, which shows the game to be split into three Acts. The first has Jordain arriving at the station and dealing with a traitor; in the second, he uncovers the true goals of the Invisibles and its leader - Derek Lin; in the third act, he must stop Lin from activating the Engalus, a powerful alien artifact that can reshape the universe. Not much is known about the gameplay beyond the fact that it would be an FPS with a heavy focus on exploration and story, presented in a "cinematic" style. Crytek described the game as "Half-Life meets Metal Gear Solid", while Brian says it "borne a striking resemblance to Deus Ex in both tone and gameplay, except exceedingly more sci-fi in its presentation." The completed Engalus tech demo was shown behind closed doors at the European Computer Trade Show in 2000, with Crytek searching for backers to fully develop the game. Brian had graduated by then, needed a paying job, and felt unprepared to move to Germany to continue development, so he left the team and went to work at Turbine on Asheron's Call 2. By this time, Ubisoft had agreed to fund Crytek to develop X-iSLE - which would eventually become the first FarCry game (released in 2004). As the entire company focused on the game, the other three projects were abandoned. Crytek would eventually sell the FarCry license to Ubisoft and create the Crysis series, while Brian Audette would work on Turbine and Mythic Entertainment until he landed his current job at BioWare Austin, as Content Lead for Star Wars: The Old Republic. However, around 2003, Brian would revisit Engalus, creating a Deus Ex mod based on a mission from the game's second act, where Jordain must evade a security lockdown in the Space Station and continue his investigation with various approaches at his disposal. Unfortunately, both the Deus Ex mod and the original Engalus tech demo are no longer accessible, as the servers used to host them are long gone.

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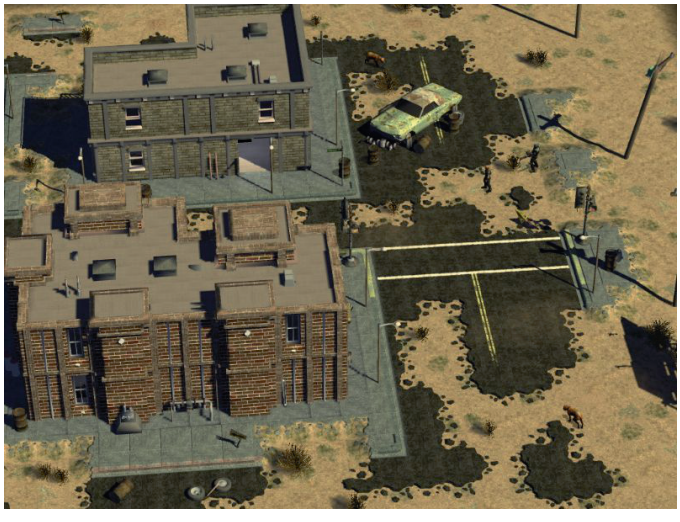
FALLOUT 3: VAN BUREN

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Before Bethesda Softworks acquired the Fallout franchise in 2004, the main series was always been developed by Black Isle Studios while the IP was owned and published by Interplay Entertainment. After releasing Fallout 1 & 2, Black Isle and Interplay started working on the third chapter of the saga under the codename "Van Buren." The plan was to use the new 3D engine but replace the first-person action with a traditional top-down view. This 3D engine made by Black Isle, dubbed "Jefferson Engine," was created to develop Baldur's Gate 3: The Black Hound, the other infamous lost game of this studio. As far as we know, work on the two games was about 95% completed before they were canned. Most of Van Buren's story and dialogue were already made and at least half of the world was already modeled. Full work on Fallout 3 was started when Interplay and their parent company Titus extended the license for D&D games on consoles; for some reasons this made them to lose the same license for PC iterations, forcing them to cancel The Black Hound. The Baldur's Gate 3 team was then moved to Fallout 3, but unfortunately Van Buren was canned as well when Titus and Interplay decided to focus their resources on console games and move the team to work on Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel 2 (never completed) and Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2 (released in 2004 for PS2 and Xbox). Even if Black Isle Studios' version of Fallout 3 was never released, we know a lot about its planned plot and gameplay. The game would have taken place in the year 2253 in the American southwest (Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Utah). In an interview with Damien Foletto (former Game Designer at Black Isle) by the Winterwind Productions, he talks about his memories on the main storyline for Van Buren: "I'm sure I'll miss a lot, but I'll try. The overall story involves the player discovering he is a carrier of a nasty virus that if it does not kill you, it makes you sterile. After "escaping" the prison because of a strange assault by what looks like NCR soldiers, the player immediately has the freedom to go where they want. During the course of his adventures, the player discovers that in order to get the prison robots to cease their pursuit, the player must hunt down and retrieve several escaped prisoners and return them to their cell, where the prison computer checks off the prisoners from its list. The player later discovers that returning the prisoners conveys to the computer where the prisoners went to and how far the virus has been spread throughout the wasteland. Once enough prisoners have been tallied, the computer unlocks an orbiting

nuclear missile station and begins a countdown to “cleansing” the land. As it turns out, this is the situation the main bad guy wants, because he wants to “cleanse” the earth’s surface (at least the American portion) so he can start the human race anew. The player is then tasked with finding a way to the orbiting station to stop the bad guy – or help him, if he so chooses.” One major side plot in this lost version of Fallout 3 consisted of an ongoing war between two major factions: The New California Republic (NCR) and the Brotherhood of Steel (BoS). The player could influence the war, like in previous titles, which would influence the region as a whole. While following the general gameplay and mission structure of the first two Fallout games, Van Buren was designed to have two different combat system: real time or turn based combat. The player would have the ability to switch between the two on the fly or stick with their preferred style throughout the entire game. A playable tech demo for the game was leaked online in May 2007 to the website “No Mutants Allowed.” The “plot” of this prototype had nothing to do with the main storyline, instead taking place during the Great War in the Great Midwest Commonwealth or Pacific Time Zone. The player character is not the protagonist of Van Buren, but is referred to as “The Citizen”. The family of this protagonist ignored the air raid sirens and were incinerated in a nuclear bombardment, leaving only the Citizen alive. The goal of this short tech demo was to reach one of the Vaults, and it was used to show how the final game could have looked and played. After Bethesda acquired the Fallout IP, they developed and released a new, completely different version of Fallout 3, published in October 2008 for PC, PS3 and Xbox 360. Several Black Isle staff members that worked on the lost version of Fallout 3 founded Obsidian Entertainment andy worked along with Bethesda on Fallout: New Vegas, using some of the themes, factions and characters originally conceived for Van Buren. New Vegas was then released in October 2010, acclaimed with great reviews by fans and the press. In December 2014, InXile Entertainment (a company founded by Brian Fargo, former founder of Interplay) filed a new trademark for the name "Van Buren” and many fans speculate that they could somehow revive the original Black Isle project. After all, InXile already resurrected some old classic IPs with their Wasteland 2, Torment: Tides of Numenera and The Bard's Tale IV, so we can only wait and see what they plan to do with the Van Buren trademark.

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INTO THE SHADOW

Article by: Jade Avis, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Into the Shadows is a cancelled action RPG that began development in the fall of 1993 and was due to be released on the PC, with a rumored Sega Saturn conversion (that was never started). At the time, the project received many exciting previews in the pages of gaming publications, thanks to its beautiful 3D graphic engine, but gameplay details were scarce. Into the Shadows was the first game announced from Triton, a promising Swedish demogroup who were active from 1992 until 1998, while Scavenger Inc. was their parent company and potential publisher. Triton had previously released graphic demos called Crystal Dream and Crystal Dream 2 (in 1992 and 1993, respectively) which consisted of showing off the company's programming, musical and artistic skills. They also released the Fast Tracker tool in 1993 (a multi-channel MOD composer) and the Fast Tracker 2 (a XM module composer) in 1994. Before fully working on Into the Shadows, Triton was also developing another cancelled game titled "Huntdown", a sci-fi exploration adventure in a procedurally generated voxel planet. In Huntdown players would have landed on an alien world, exploring space stations and underground tunnels, while flying around using jetpacks and spacecrafts. This sci-fi project sounded promising for sure, but in the end it was scrapped to focus on the development of Into the Shadows. Scavenger Inc. was the main studio and publisher for Scavenger's games, composed of many young, independent coders, designers and musicians from the Amiga Demoscene - In the '90s they worked closely with GT Interactive to release their titles in Europe and US. The collaboration between Triton and Scavenger had the potential to show to the world what the Swedish developers were capable of in terms of 3D engines, a technology that was still in its early days. A rolling demo for Into the Shadows was released in 1995 showcasing the 4 out of a possible 20 characters within the game, as well as Triton's revolutionary 3D engine – it showed real time shadows and fluid animations. Triton aimed at running the game well on lower spec hardware - a 486 processor - compared to the Quake engine which required a Pentium to run at a playable speed. This early demo shows a dungeon environment and in the final game, players would have been able to go through a huge medieval castle that unlocked more floors, the more the player explored. The team had their own motion capture system to record animations in their small apartment in Sweden, manually creating and placing each model into the environment. As one of Triton's former developers told us: "All 3D objects were done by hand, by writing decimal numbers for all vertexes and then filling the vertexes with polygons in hexadecimal numbers. Same for UV coordinates. All polygons had to be sorted by hand, by doing sorting groups. All this was done in Triton's own 3D editor. All graphics went through a renderer, where it prerendered lights and shadows. Realtime shadows were done by using a simplified 3D mesh that cast stencil shadows in real time. The game was programmed in Turbo Pascal and

assembler." Triton was a team of young devs with no prior experience on developing videogames, so it was not easy for them to work on Into the Shadows. They took on a massive workload, developing not only the game but even all the complex tools they needed to create it. The effort put into developing indie games today was far greater than it is now. They wanted to make the best game possible, with tight and responsive controls, beautiful 3D graphics along with a great story and puzzles: it was hard task, but they were determined to succeed. Unfortunately, despite its promising team and development, Into the Shadows was cancelled in 1997 because of missing payments and lawsuits between GT Interactive and Scavenger, that lead to the bankruptcy of the latter in 1998. Triton went inactive in the same year, however some members successfully founded another game company called Starbreeze Studios, who went on to develop such loved games as Enclave, The Chronicles of Riddick, The Darand BTwo Sons.

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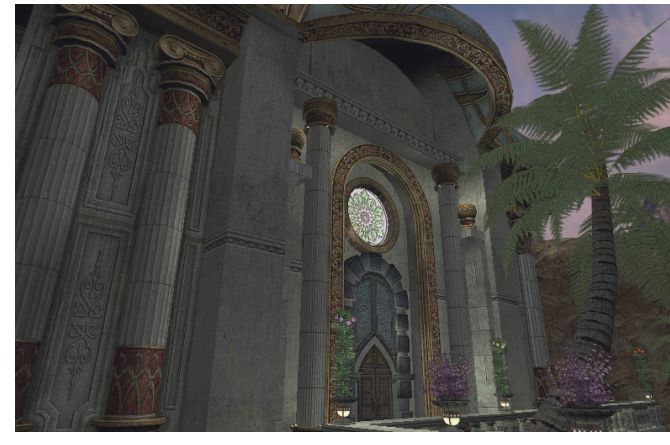
MYST IV: ADVENTURE BEYOND THE D'NI ULTRAWORLD

Article by: Andrea Ritsu

In 1998, Cyan Worlds Inc. and Mattel decided to outsource the work on future Myst game to other developers. This would let Cyan work on their upcoming project Uru while still keeping the Myst main-series afloat during said development period. Various developers were given a chance to pitch their idea for a story and soon enough Presto Studios was working on the next game in the series, Myst III: Exile. However, they were not the only developer to be assigned the Myst license. DreamForge Intertainment, the developers of the horror themed adventure game Sanitarium, started work on the fourth Myst game one year after Presto Studios effort. The game, known internally as Myst IV: Adventure Beyond the D'ni Ultraworld, would never be released or shown to the public during its development. After having worked on the game for two years (June 1999 to June 2001), it was canceled as the rights to the Myst franchise transferred from Mattel to Ubisoft. Myst III: Exile was released the next year and the next game in the franchise was to be developed internally at Ubisoft and was released in 2004 as Myst IV: Revelation. Patrick Fortier, the creative director of Myst IV: Revelation, opened up about the unreleased version of Myst IV, hereby referred to as Ultraworld to avoid confusion, in 2004 on the Uru Obsession community. According to Fortier, Ultraworld's development was only about 20% finished, but the designs themselves were completely done. The game was presented in realtime 3D, a first for the series at that point. Some ideas from Ultraworld even managed to carry over into Myst IV: Revelation. Specifically the inclusion of Sirrus and Achenar, the two brothers from the original Myst. Shortly thereafter Areth and Gadren, two users from Uru Obsession community, were able to unearth concept art, screenshots and even video showing off Ultraworld in motion.



The game ran at a low framerate but featured some very beautiful visuals for its time, having complex environmental design that rivalled, if not outmatched, Cyan's own 3D project, Uru, at the time. The standard Myst-cursor was still present, stationed in the center of the screen as the player walked around and interacted with the environment. The concept art shows us a look at Atrus, Catherine as well as Sirrus and Achenar's 3D models. What's the most interesting about these models is that Sirrus was bald and without facial hair. In his appearance in the original Myst, as well as Myst IV: Revelation, he had well combed hair and a goatee beard. Two original characters were also featured in Ultraworld, Kervis and Merinia. The purpose of these characters are unknown, as is most of Ultraworld's story. A sketch showing off an "Ice Locall" age is also featured among the concept art, showing a mechanical panel controlling some sort of platform. After Ultraworld was canceled, DreamForge Intertainment was soon gone. Their last known project was an unfinished Werewolf: the Apocalypse game that eventually led to the shutdown of the company. Not much else is known about Myst IV: Adventure Beyond the D'ni Ultraworld and the Uru Obsessed community has since closed down. Ubisoft's Myst IV: Revelation would be released in 2004 for PC and Xbox, but the resume for Ande Gaumond claims a prototype was made for PC, PlayStation and Gamecube. Whether or not this potential prototype was another unknown attempt at Myst IV or an early version of Myst IV: Revelation is unknown.

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PROSPERO

Article by: Philip Dempsey

Prospero is a canceled massively multiplayer online game that was in development for PC by Valve Software, the studio behind popular games like Half-Life, Portal, Team Fortress 2, Dota 2 and many more. Prospero was one of the first projects planned by Valve when they were founded in 1996. Along with a FPS titled Quiver, Prospero was to be a flagship game for the new company, but as Quiver morphed into the now legendary Half-Life and begun to take up more resources, Prospero fell by the wayside. Prospero was designed as a third person adventure game inspired by Myst and the works of the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. The game was to have a focus on exploration and an intricate storyline. Originally, it was going to be a single player game but while development went on it morphed into a multiplayer game. This shift came about due to many of its ideas for single player being moved over to Quiver

/ Half-Life. Players would take control of a character known as either “The Librarian” or “Aleph”, a female protagonist with psionic powers. The game would focus around a “Library” that served as a hub world to the levels. From what can be seen from prototype screenshots, platforming and exploration would have been the focus of gameplay. From the Library, players could access official levels made by Valve as well as user-created levels from people all over the world, with an editor to create and share their own levels. Prospero was also planned to have friend lists and a server browser with each game acting as its own server, to play levels online with other gamers. Long-time Valve employee Mark Laidlaw was originally hired to help with Prospero's story which he called "a science fantasy epic". However as development progressed on both Quiver and Prospero, it became clear that the team couldn't cope with two projects at once and the evolution of Quiver into Half-Life made it their main game that had to be completed at all cost. Prospero was put “on-hold”, and in the end it was never completed. Thanks to an interview with Marc Laidlaw by François Aymes for Jeuxvideo.com, we can read some more details on the project: "François: Prospero's development was halted in 1998, was it because of Half-Life?

Marc: It was halted because some of us went to game shows and saw things that looked like Prospero, and felt that we weren’t doing anything that was going to make us stand out in the crowd. The project was flailing, struggling for identity, and there wasn’t a sense of great confidence. It was a natural thing to move more of our attention to Half-Life. Prospero was dead in the water well before Half-Life 2 came along.

François: Was Prospero supposed to feature a single player adventure ? Can you give us an idea of the plot?

Marc: It straddled the line between single player and MMO, which was not something we could have pulled off back then. There were all sorts of possible plots, but we never got far enough to have to decide which one would work for what we were building."

However, this would not mean that all the work spent on Prospero would go to waste. Screenshots from Prospero show off levels that have a striking similarity to ones found in the Black Mesa and Planet Xen sections of Half-Life. A handful of music files found in the Half-Life sound folder also have the name “Prospero” in their filenames and fans speculate that they could have originally been composed for the lost game. Perhaps Prospero's biggest contribution was that its server browser service and friends list concepts would return as the basis for Valve's successful digital distribution platform: Steam. Even though Prospero has been canceled and many of its ideas used by other projects, Valve CEO Gabe Newell has said multiple times that they could return to the project at some point: “Nothing ever really dies here, it's just a question of how long until we get around to doing it”. Who knows, maybe a new version of Prospero could even be released before the most-wanted Half Life 3.

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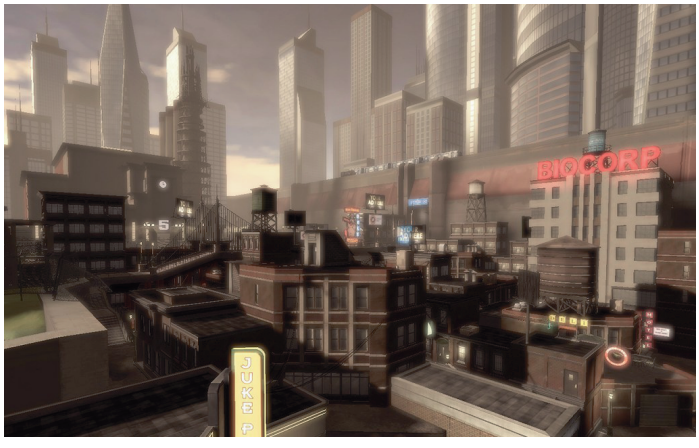
REVOLVER (JADE EMPIRE 2)

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Revolver is the codename for an ambitious action RPG that was in development for PC, Xbox 360 and PS3 by BioWare with the help of Big Sandwich Games. The project started around the same time as they were working on the first Mass Effect for Xbox 360 (announced in October 2005). While Mass Effect would have been their major exclusive for Microsoft's home console (PC version of ME was released 6 months later), Revolver was meant to be their new multiplatform series and many resources were put into the project, taking about 5 years to develop. Unfortunately, in 2009 the game was canned for a series of complex reasons and Bioware never officially announced Revolver to the public without showing any images or releasing any info. While it's already unfortunate that we will never be able to play an original BioWare title, the story behind Revolver becomes even more tragic when one finds out that the project was initially started as another, most-requested-by-fans game: a sequel to cult-following, martial arts RPG Jade Empire. To understand better what happened to Jade Empire 2 and the importance of Revolver in Bioware's market strategy, we have to dig down to remember what the studio was doing before becoming a company owned by EA with 3 major ongoing series (Mass Effect, Dragon Age and Star Wars: The Old Republic). In the mid '90s BioWare became a favorite team to western RPG fans thanks to cult classics such as the Baldur's Gate and Neverwinter Nights series. At the end of the '90s they wanted to enter the console market and developed MDK2 for Interplay (published in 2000 for Dreamcast and PC), creating a quality third person action-shooter loved by fans and the critics, but that did not set the market on fire as they could have dreamed for. The real console success for Bioware arrived in 2003 with the help of LucasArts, when they released Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic for the original Xbox. Still, part of the success was because of the popular Star Wars series, not for a proprietary IP, and BioWare wanted it all. To try to create a new successful IP and to be able to win the average console owner, Bioware decided to embrace a more action oriented combat system suitable for controllers. The results was one of the best action RPGs to be released on the Xbox: Jade Empire, published in April 2005. Only a few months later Microsoft released their Xbox 360 and Bioware was already working on 2 exclusive titles for the new hardware: Mass Effect and Jade Empire 2. As reported by Gamespot in November 2005, BioWare co-founder Ray Muzkya told to the press: "BioWare

definitely plans to continue the Jade Empire franchise [...] The Jade team did a great job with the first game in that series; we have great teams working on all of our games here. We've also said in the past that we're working on not just one, but two Xbox 360 titles. Enough said." We don't know what exactly happened after that, but it's possible that the not-as-high-as-expected sales for the original Jade Empire on the Xbox made the team rethink their Xbox-only strategy and the future of their Jade Empire IP. Bioware decided to develop this new project for PS3 too, creating a new role playing experience that could have matched the titles from their golden age of Baldur's Gate and Neverwinter Nights. While the first-person-RPG-shooter style of Mass Effect sounded like the best type of game to sell to the Xbox / Halo crowd, Jade Empire 2 was chosen as the core to develop a new action RPG series for both consoles and PC. After only a few initial concepts, the mythical chinese martial-arts setting of Jade Empire 2 was dropped in favor of a more urban, near-future sci-fi settings. With the Jade Empire IP removed from the project, Bioware labeled it with the codename "Revolver", a title that seems to have not had any particular meaning if not for the same initial letter of the R: drive on their shared network in which files for the game were stored. Other rumored codenames considered for the project were Rainbow, Razor and Riverdance. Even if Revolver was never officially announced by BioWare, in the last few years the internal codename was revealed through many different resumes, articles, interviews and demo reels, allowing the world to find out about this lost title. While Revolver was already in development and Jade Empire 2 canned, in 2007 Eurogamer asked BioWare co-founders if they had plans to create a sequel to Jade Empire: "It's an IP, it's a setting that we were really passionate about, and we still are. Both Greg and I were big believers in the IP... We're just looking for the right way to deploy it." The studio really wanted to create the greatest western action RPG ever conceived and they started brainstorming ambitious features that could evolve the genre into a new standard. It seems that they exaggerated those ideas as while Revolver was still in its early stage, many of those features were already being cut. As wrote by an anonymous developer that worked on the game: "While still working on Mass Effect, I'm included in some of the Revolver meetings. Revolver is at that interesting point where things start getting cut. This is good. The project had a whole lot of things up in the air, a ton of features that were each individually doable but way beyond the scope of the project when taken together (unless we had more funding than any other project and weren't planning to ship until 2012)." Even with many of its features removed, the game was still too big for just BioWare. To be able to fulfill their vision for Revolver they soon hired Big Sandwich Games to help with the development, a team funded by ex-Rockstar Vancouver employees. This could not have been just a coincidence as Revolver was meant to blend sandbox open-world urban games like GTA and classic action RPGs, using "super powers" (such as the ability to jump from one skyscraper to another) to move around the city, as in Crackdown, Prototype or Infamous. Players would have explored the game's world using exaggerated parkour movements, jumps and climbing as seen in the

Assassin's Creed series, while fighting enemies with the over-the-top, responsive combat style of Devil May Cry and Ninja Gaiden. All of this while keeping the same story-focused narrative of classic BioWare titles, but in non-linear branching paths. Writers and developers soon found out that merging a free roaming open world game with a complex narrative was not without problems: "So we're trying to figure out how flight messes up plots - which plots can be broken by you being able to fly into an area that you'd ordinarily have to walk through (and thus run into encounters that advance the plot). [...] In Jade Empire, there were encounters that you could skip, definitely, but there was no way you were gonna skip an entire dungeon -- the dungeons were just too expensive and too few in number. [...] Right now, we're focusing on making dungeons (where here, "dungeon" means "an enclosed area with a bunch of combat in it") that give the players multiple reasons to go inside - so the player doesn't have to make the choice between getting content or missing content for roleplaying reasons." Revolver wanted to allow players to enjoy story focused RPGs in a sandbox world by giving them multiple ways to receive important quests from different people. If we would miss (or kill?) a character with a key-quest, the game system would offer the same or a slightly different quest from another NPC, giving more freedom on how to freely explore the world while still following the main storyline that writers wanted to tell. A similar conversation system to the one used in Mass Effect was also planned, with dialogue to resolve as some sort of "puzzle" and different answers for different "morality alignments". A lot of time was spent on creating concepts and prototypes to better understand what the team would have been able to do. At some phase of development the team also experimented with a cell shading engine, similar to what happened to Borderlands. Before it was canceled in 2009 it seems that Revolver was close to the end of pre-production, meaning that the core gameplay, story and features were set. "We have a demo that looks better than many finished games and gives a pretty good look at the directions we intend to go on look and feel." What happened to Revolver? While the game was never officially announced or canceled, there are a series of possible reasons for its demise. Mass Effect became a HUGE commercial and critical triumph and every doubt about being able to be profitable with a new IP were wiped out: now BioWare had its own Star Wars series. They did not need to experiment with another new IP as Mass Effect was already more popular than they could have dreamed. Mass Effect 2 was later released on Playstation 3 too and it soon became a consolidated multiplatform franchise. If that was not enough, in October 2008 the studio announced another big project that in the following years would have taken a lot of their resources: Star Wars: The Old Republic, a MMORPG set in the Star Wars universe. To be able to keep up with SW:ToR's development, BioWare had to open a new studio in Edmonton and they even asked for help from Big Sandwich Games. As they already had a strong collaboration with BSG, the team could have moved from Revolver to The Old Republic. We also have to remember that in October 2007 BioWare was bought out by Electronic Arts and they had the final word on which games had to be completed or not. When the financial crisis of 2007 - 2009 hit USA and Europe, lots of

gaming studios closed down and many projects were canned. It was not a time for experimental, overly-ambitious games and EA decided to cut funds for Revolver and for another original BioWare project for next gen consoles, titled "Agent". It made more sense from a marketing standpoint to focus on proven franchises rather than on expensive, still unfinished projects that could have failed. After about 7 years of difficult development in late 2009, BioWare were also finishing their work on Dragon Age: Origins, finally released in November of that year. The game became another huge success for the studio, with more than 3.2 million copies sold in just a few months. Unfortunately, Revolver did not have the same chance to prove its original open world gameplay and ambitious features. People that were working on the project were moved to more profitable games at BioWare, such as the money-making sequels for Mass Effect and Dragon Age.

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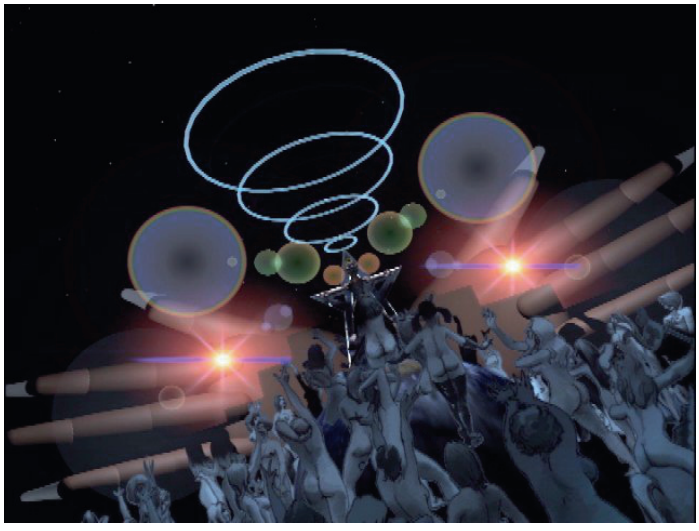
SEX 'N' DRUGS 'N' ROCK 'N' ROLL

Article by: James Alan Griffiths

Video games and controversy have always been linked. There are too many games that have fallen foul of the mainstream media to mention, but we can all name many, across many gaming eras. Sensible Software's Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (also known as SDR, which I will hereby abbreviate to from here on in) would undoubtedly have fallen foul of such outlets, committed to warning consumers off the game in the name of good taste and in protecting the purity of young and influential children who make up the computer game playing public in the eyes of parents and classic journalists. Intended as a PC point and click adventure inspired by the Leisure Suit Larry series, as well as Lucasarts' seminal Monkey Island series, about one man and his experiences in rock and roll, SDR's beginnings date back to the mid 1980s. Jon Hare and Chris Yates, childhood friends and eventual Sensible Software co-founders, bedroom coded a title called Drugged Out Hippy and this is where the project began in 1985. The genus of the idea, Drugged Out Hippy was ultimately dismissed as being too uncommercial - more of a pipe dream. The success the pair achieved with Sensible Software and most notably its flagship Sensible Soccer series would eventually in 1996 allow the company to do anything they



wanted under a publishing deal with Warner Bros. It's easy nowadays to forget quite how popular Sensible Software were in the 1990s. They developed 16 bit favourites, including popular military themed strategy shooter Cannon Fodder, and Mega-Lo Mania, a similar title released across many formats. Their biggest success, however, came from the Sensible Soccer series, which helped cement the company's major success. These football games are still today remembered as cult sports favourites. Riding high on the popularity of these games, Hare and Yates decided the time was right to resurrect Drugged Out Hippy, along with other previous game ideas with Warner Bros, who became their new publisher, keen to listen to game ideas, the general consensus being that Sensible Software could become a household name outside of Europe. The game would make the best use of cutting edge technology and become a brand new experience unlike anything released before it. When development started on what became SDR - the game's title being inspired by a proto-punk hit by British rock band Ian Dury and the Blockheads - its sheer ambition and scope were huge. It was originally envisaged to feature 150 characters, all painstakingly modelled in then-state of the art 3D rendering, as well as many different in game locations. The art style - huge exaggerated features and shiny, plasticine style character models - is reminiscent of adult-orientated British comic books such as Viz, and the game promised to offer players a similar, vulgar humour that clearly was not intended for children. Playing as Nigel Staniforth Smythe, a character you'd probably see in a This is Spinal Tap prequel, the proposed plot involved a loan taken from a Hell's Angels biker gang, which our protagonist used to fund the purchase of a van to take his rock and roll band - the Subverts - on tour. Of course, the fact that it's a loan implies that the money needs to be paid back, and this would be the player's task - to earn funds by playing gigs and trying to break the big time (probably at an alarming rate of interest - such is probably the way with motorcycle loan sharks). If your exploits didn't yield profits, your black market creditors would be round to get you, and it would be game over. Sadly Nigel is easily distracted, (which likely explains why he doesn't have good credit) and money was otherwise spent on women and drugs. Not just one particular type of narcotic, either. In fact, gameplay mechanics would be altered to simulate the kind of effects attributed to the misuse of the substance Nigel had ingested. The sheer size of the game meant it was originally planned to occupy a massive 15 discs. This was due in part to the sheer scope of the project, but also because of the complex 3D models that made up the world of SDR, and of course a rock-heavy soundtrack that made up the fictional band's repertoire. These songs were professionally written and recorded at London's Pinewood studios, with the expectation being that the game would not just be a punk-style middle finger salute to the gaming world, but also a respectable musical project it its own right and, during development stages, discussions were held as to how SDR could possibly traverse other types of media to create a multi-faceted experience. The project was set to become Sensible Software's most ground-breaking game, but a series of unfortunate setbacks eventually called time on the game. Firstly, delays to the game were caused by a lack of knowledge in how to program 3D titles. While the project was coming along nicely on paper, it was lacking in terms of being a playable game .The company's success in the 16 bit era, and the demand for their games on these systems meant they weren't

used to working with graphics found on the next generation of consoles and computers. In fact, the jump from 16 to 32 bit was something of an epoch at the time, certainly the biggest advancement in video games ever seen. Having to adapt quickly while maintaining stringent deadlines was not easy for the company, and the game's engine, the promise of a game in playable form completely stalled. Music was recorded, playable scenarios were formed but because of a bottleneck in translating this to screen, advancement was extremely slow. Then in 1997 Warner Bros sold the video game publishing arm of their business. This was purchased by GT Interactive. Apparently no stranger to computer game controversy themselves, games in their back catalogue included adult first person shooters such as Duke Nukem and games in the Doom series, which had both attracted attention from detractors both in the United States and the UK. However, they seemingly drew the line at SDR. References to the gratuitous use of drugs and other adult content in the game were just too real for them. Being an American company, their main interest was in the U.S. market, where the British humour - much of the content was tongue in cheek - would be lost on such an audience. Sensible sought legal advice and found that the content expressed within the game was entirely legal, save for one blasphemous reference which was promptly removed. The objection to what SDR contained was purely moral even if it didn't contravene any actual laws. In order to appease their new publisher, Sensible tried to add more multicultural elements in an effort to make it presentable in other territories. This could not persuade GT, and it swiftly became clear that the only way to save the project was to find a new publisher. Despite approaching several big names at this time, it was extremely hard to convey how the game would actually play, due to the issues with getting it into a something representing a game, and it became clear that they couldn't sell the game on Sensible Software's name alone. The situation became risky because Sensible Software founders Jon Hare and Chris Yates were in a position where they would have to bankroll the project themselves - dangerous territory, and something they ultimately refused to do. The setbacks experienced with SDR caused a knock on effect with other games offered in the now defunct Warner Bros publishing deal. Sensible Software laid off a large percentage of their staff, and this once revered British developer ceased to operate, eventually being sold to Codemasters. In true rock and roll sentiment, Hare and Yates are today no longer in contact. So, the general consensus with SDR is that its controversial content was the cause of its cancellation, but this is only really half the story. In truth the project was just too ambitious. Something born from a joke became too ambitious for its own good. Even compromises in the sheer volume of content was not enough to create a viable game. Years ahead of its time graphically, and in sensibility, its uniqueness would mean that sadly it wasn't to be. Had it been released today it's a pretty fair assumption that SDR wouldn't have encountered the same issues as it had when it was languishing in development hell in the 1990s. Many titles released today seemingly advocate the use of drugs, sex and other adult activities with little or no backlash from mainstream media. These activities are not the main focus but always peripherally within the make-up of said game. But in its stunted form, with its quirky, arguably dated art style it remains a strange and enduring prospect. Even though we can't experience this piece of rock and roll satire from start to finish, fittingly we can view it and listen to it as

the medium it served to emulate so well, in a series of music videos that would have featured. SDR was a brave act of defiance. The fact that it misfired is, in the grand scheme of things, not hugely important. However, the game lives on as a 52-minute concept album that utilises its diverse rock soundtrack, along with accompanying videos that encapsulate the kind of graphics the game would have presented. A fitting encore, and the next best thing for a failed game that was years ahead of its time.

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SLEEPING GIANTS

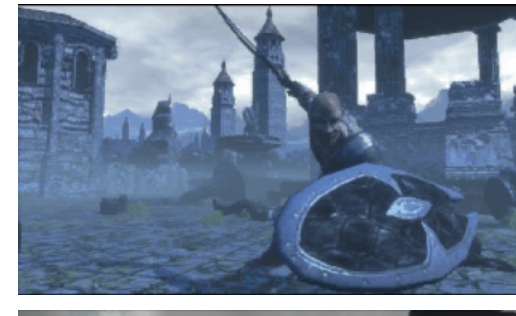
Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Warren Spector entered the video game business in 1989 when he joined ORIGIN, co-producing Ultima VI and Wing Commander, then producing two games in the Ultima Underworld series, Ultima VII: Serpent Isle, System Shock, Crusader: No Remorse and many others. His name soon became a legend for PC RPG fans. In 1997, after a year as General Manager of Looking Glass Austin and producer on Thief: The Dark Project, Spector received a call from John Romero: it was the start of the new Ion Storm Austin team and the conception of another classic title, Deus Ex. As studio director, Spector later oversaw development of Deus Ex: Invisible War, released in December 2003, and Thief: Deadly Shadows, released in June 2004. After such a massive number of well received games, he wanted to create something even more ambitious. During an interview with Games Radar in June 2012, he recalls the time when he quit working at Ion Storm: "Here's the thing: I left Ion Storm and Eidos in the spring of 2004, frankly because I felt out of place at that company. I was at E3 that year, and I remember looking around at all the games - I was showing Thief: Deadly Shadows, which I thought of as a slowly-paced, cerebral, genuinely mature sort of game. And I looked around and there was Crash 'N' Burn, the racing game about how big an explosion can you create, there was Hitman: Contracts, a game where this time you get to kill with a meathook, and over there was 25 to Life, a game about kids killing cops. I was like, oh my god, I can't do this. So I left. I had six months off, but really, all I was doing in that time was planning my next thing". In March 2005 Warren Spector officially announced his new company: Junction Point Studios, a team named after a cancelled online RPG he was working on during his last months at Looking Glass. He founded the studio with the help of another former employee of Looking Glass and Ion Storm: Art Min. Art worked on System Shock and Terra Nova, before leaving Looking Glass in 1996, to co-found Multitude and heading up the creation of FireTeam, the first online-only, voice-enabled, squad-based tactical game. Following the release of FireTeam, Art joined Valve Software as Online Content Group Project Manager, where he managed the acquisition of the Counter-Strike IP. In 2003, Art joined Ion Storm Austin to work as project director on the third, lost installment in the Deus Ex series (a project you can read more about in this same book), before following Warren Spector in his new adventure. From this short introduction, it's easy to understand how the hype was huge for Junction Point Studios: with such important names gamers were waiting to see what they could conceive as their first project. During the early days of Junction Point, Spector and Min conceived a few original games to pitch to different publishers. One of these pitches was titled "Sleeping Giants", an ambitious open world RPG in the vein of The Elder Scrolls: SKYRIM, set in a fantasy universe originally proposed for DC Comics by Spector and his wife. As told by Spector to Variety.com in November 2009: "[it was] a big, BIG fantasy game that I had been wanting to do for about 15 years. My wife and I created a world and a whole

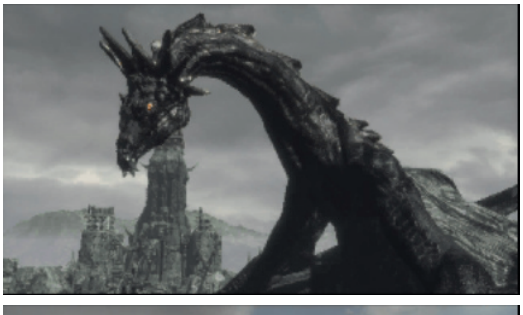
story arc for DC comics. They decided not to pick it up. I loved this world and the characters we had created." As stated in the Sleeping Giants proposal document, their main objective was to create a fantasy game that meld the best elements of some of the most successful and innovative games of the mid '00s. Imagine the ethical choices of Fable or Knights of the Old Republic combined with the freeform gameplay of Grand Theft Auto, a pinch of immersiveness and wonder from Thief or Underworld. Wrap it up in a story as sophisticated, adult and relevant as Deus Ex. That was the ambitious plan for Sleeping Giants, wanting to offer state of the art freeform gameplay with myriad of choices and unique consequences as players explore deeply simulated cities, towns and dungeons however they choose. With Sleeping Giants, Junction Point's goal was to hit the heart of the Bioware and Blizzard audiences, taking inspiration from the Diablo, Neverwinter Nights and Baldur's Gate series. By looking at the game today, we can say that it looks a lot like SKYRIM, but it was created more than 5 years before Bethesda's popular action RPG, in a time when Oblivion was not published yet. Dragon Age: Origins and Dragon's Dogma, two other similar titles, would only release respectively in November 2009 and May 2012. Sleeping Giants could really have been a revolutionary RPG for its time, if only completed. The project's potential did not go unnoticed by publishers and soon Junction Point signed a deal with Majesco Entertainment, when the company was trying to heavily enter into the AAA market, with projects like Advent Rising (released in May 2005), Psychonauts (released in April 2005) and a lot of movie tie-ins. It's not clear when full work on Sleeping Giants was started, but initially a series of concept arts were created using talented freelancers, to show the feeling of the game. After a while Junction Point were able to hire more developers and they developed an early prototype using Unreal Engine 3, a tech needed to run both indoor and outdoor worlds, from cramped, claustrophobic dungeons to city and countryside locations. Their plan was to develop the game on PC along with the two (at the time yet unreleased) "next-gen" platforms: PS3 and Xbox 360. Dragons would have had a major role in Sleeping Giants' lore and Junction Point took notes from other dragon-focused games as Drakan, Panzer Dragoon and the Breath of Fire series. The team wanted to create a powerful, adult story featuring a unique central character - a young man, born of a dragon mother and a human father. The blood of dragons flows through his veins, giving him great power, at the expense of his humanity. He finds himself torn between human and dragon forces at war with one another and must choose who to befriend and who to oppose. The survival of one or the other species hangs in the balance of Sleeping Giants' world. Reading the backstory featured on the game's proposal gives us a quick look of the main settings and characters promised for the game: "For nearly fifty years, man and dragon battled for dominion over the world. Dragon aeries were razed. Dragons were killed in vast numbers. Nests were torched. Infant dragons were cut down and left for scavengers. But mankind's losses were worse - the number of human dead was staggering. With defeat seemingly at hand, the mages of the world came to mankind's leaders with a terrible plan. They could, they claimed, bring an end to all dragon life by conjuring a great magick - The Great Fire. This was humanity's only hope. The destructive spell did end the dragon threat, as promised - but not

without cost. The effort depleted the world's magical energies almost completely and spawned a winter from which the world has yet to recover, despite the passage of time. The world may well never see summer again. For 200 years, no human had seen a dragon. Though not quite the stuff of legend, the ancient enmity between man and dragon was hardly the stuff of everyday life. Many years have passed since that great and grave moment in human history and, recently, some in the outlying territories claim to have seen dragons in flight once more. In point of fact, the magical event that supposedly killed the dragons - The Great Fire - did nothing of the kind. Yes, it destroyed many of them but its main impact was to consume so much magical energy that many dragons - being dependent upon magic for their existence, the way humans depend on air and water - simply went quietly, secretly dormant. A handful of dragon eggs, hidden in the most inaccessible dragon nests, survived the events that killed their parents. Adults in the later phases of life - a time when dragons isolated themselves from their own kind and the rest of the world - were locked in sleep in places so remote no human could find them, no human magic touch them. Most intriguingly, a handful of hatchling infants were enchanted by their elders, changed into human form. Their memories were stripped, leaving them unaware of their true natures. These few were left to be raised by humans until a time when the world would be safe for dragons once more. As the story begins, two things are happening - human mages have noticed noticeable upswings in the level of magical energy in the world, a natural result of the passage of time and of strict controls on the expenditure of magical energy. Mages, mostly descendents of once powerful men and women, are making a push for renewed political power. Ancient magical artifacts, long useless, are once again sought after and fought over. The second impact of a magical resurgence? The surviving dragons are waking up. In the Northlands, where the Great Fire was unleashed, a hatchling has reportedly been captured, butchered and burned. In the Disputed Lands, a full adult dragon is said to have razed a town before disappearing. It's unclear whether these events really took place but that they are being reported at all is disconcerting. Antonio Balthasar, the player character, is the offspring of an enchanted dragon mother (the Lady Tecla) and a human father, now dead. Early in the game he is unaware of his true nature, thinking himself a normal human - an adventurer in the employ of the wealthy Tecla. During the course of the game, he learns that Tecla is his mother and that she is one of the dragon hatchlings, enchanted years ago into human form. From that moment on, he finds himself increasingly enmeshed in the growing conflict between humankind and the dragons. Will Antonio work to restore dragons to power? Will he fight for humanity, even if it means an end to magic and to dragonkind? Or will he take the middle path and bring peace to the two warring factions? Each player will make his or her own choice." The story was planned to

be told in a series of self-contained episodes through the whole game, taking anywhere from 30 minutes to three hours to play to completion. Each episode, though self-contained, would be part of the larger, overarching plot. The world of Sleeping Giants drawn inspiration from Renaissance Italy, notably Venice, with its distinctive canals and bridges. The central city in the game would feature notable landmarks of the real Venice, with its canals, the Doge's Palace, the mysterious cemetery island of San Michele, St. Mark's Plaza... now, imagine dragons wheeling overhead and magical lamps reflecting off the ice of frozen canals. This was meant to ground the experience for players: one of the most popular elements in Deus Ex was the opportunity to explore places like the Statue of Liberty and the Paris catacombs. The outlying areas of Sleeping Giants would recall Tuscany, with its magnificent villas and vineyards, or Rome, with its ancient ruins and enduring majesty. Junction Point also wanted to integrate Eastern European influences into the mix, with that region's confluence of Occidental and Oriental art styles, as the moorish Spain, itself a blend of Western European and Muslim culture. Even the frozen northlands of the gameworld would draw from real world references, notably the desolate Siberian Steppes, the majesty of St. Petersburg, the mystery of the Kremlin in Moscow. Just as the game's world was inspired by the real world, so were its human races. The team hoped to offer a diverse set of characters, with racial and cultural diversity, with Caucasian and Black characters, Asians and Arab. The protagonist, affected by his awakening dragon blood, would also change his physical characteristics that, when angered, let slip glimpses of his heritage. Under certain circumstances, it becomes apparent that Antonio is not entirely as he appears on the surface. The gameplay would have also used the dragons' lore for character development, choosing between human talents or dragon abilities. Players could choose different approaches to resolve the game's quests and the gameworld would respond differently depending on their previous acts and demonstrations of dragon powers. There would be



missions to help humans and ones to help dragons: we could become a slayer of dragons or a dragon-savior, an enemy of humankind or its most noble champion. Skilled players could play the rogue, taking missions that suit their fancy regardless of who they help or harm. Junction Point's concept of "open-ended" gameplay extended to the creation of a living, breathing world, with cities, towns, dungeons, wilderness areas and dragon aeries full of both story-specific and secondary quests. During an interview with Gamasutra in March 2007, Spector said: "The key for me is creating linked sandboxes and letting players explore those little narrative chunks on their own. I'll determine why it's important that you get through a door, but how you get through it, what happens and whether you kill, talk to or ignore everyone on the other side belongs to the player. That concept of sharing authorship is where the sweet spot of game narrative is. There are some things that I think we can do to take that to the next level, and things that can be done a couple of years from now that can take it to yet another level. The end goal for me now isn't for me to allow players to play a movie, ride a roller coaster ride or provide a sandbox so they can do what they want, but is to find the compromise where I can have a dialog with each player virtually. That's what's exciting to me." Sleeping Giants was meant to be a fully sandbox experience, in some ways like GTA or Deus Ex but set in an (at the time) unprecedentedly interactive and reactive fantasy world. The cities, towns and dungeons would be open to freeform exploration and structured in such a way that let players to choose, plan and execute their own missions, from recovering quest items to destroying towns and dragon aeries, from deliveries to thefts, from protecting NPCs to killing them, from protecting wild creatures to killing rampaging monsters. Many of the wilderness areas and dungeons would have been auto-generated by a "Dynamic Gameplay System" that would fill them with new enemies, items and events to experience each time players would access to them. With a planned budget of about $20 million and an estimated shipping date in early 2008, the team knew that their project was an ambitious and risky one. At first Majesco was supporting the project with their resources, but after Advent Rising, Aeon Flux, Bloodrayne 2 and Psychonauts heavily flopped, the publisher abandoned Junction Point and cut off Sleeping Giants. Majesco's previous investment in



expensive projects and tie-in games made them to lose a lot of money and (false) rumors about the company's bankruptcy started to spread in July 2005. Their stock fell down more than 50%, their CEO Carl Yankowski resigned and the company was sued by shareholders. Their net revenue in 4Q 2005 was about $50 million less than the previous year, they cancelled the planned Taxi Driver and Ghost Rider tie-in games, canned Terminal Reality's Demonik and 20% of their staff had to be laid off. A huge game like Sleeping Giants, still in early development with a few years and millions of dollars to invest to complete, did not have a chance to survive to Majesco's economic collapse. Junction Point were able to re-acquire the rights for Sleeping Giants and kept working on it while they were searching for a new publisher. In 2006 they worked for a while on a new Episode for Half Life 2 thanks to a deal with Valve. As explained by Spector in a Reddit AMA: "Junction Point had a project cancelled. There was no money. Basically, Valve came in like a white knight and offered us some work on a Half Life episode set in a part of the Half Life universe that hadn't been explored deeply". Unfortunately Junction Point's Half Life Episode did not last long, but luckily in the meantime they found another collaboration. In March 2007 the studio was composed of about 24 people and during an interview with Eurogamer Warren Spector said that they were working on two IP: "One of them we're working in collaboration with a fellow you would have heard of out of Hollywood and one of them is based on a game-world that I created about 15 years ago with my wife. I've been waiting for the technology to catch up with the ideas in there". The "Hollywood IP" was a project titled "Ninja Gold", a modern-day ninja action adventure in collaboration with movie director John Woo: another Junction Point game that never seen the light of day. During another interview with Gamesradar in June 2012, Spector recalls what happened during that time: "Nine months of work and the publisher goes away, six more months and another publisher goes away, a year after that and another publisher goes away. And so I'm going, what the heck? I never took any time off - I was always out talking to publishers to get a deal. [...] It was interesting, because I had a bunch of publishers interested in Sleeping Giants, my epic fantasy game, and in Necessary Evil, my near-future science fiction Deus Ex-with-the-serial-numbers-filed-off game, but my agent told me to talk to Disney. Now I'm the biggest Disney fan in the world, but I said no. They're not going to be interested in Ninja Gold, they're not going to be interested in Necessary Evil, they're not going to be interested in Sleeping Giants. They're just not. And he said "Just talk to them. They're changing." And they weren't at all interested in what I was trying to make at the time, but they asked me if I was interested in doing a Mickey Mouse game. So picture yourself: huge Disney fan, sitting in a room full of Disney people surrounded by Disney-ish stuff, and they say "How would you like to play with the most recognisable icon on the planet Earth?" And I said no, because I don't make games for kids - Disney, in my view, had done a very good job of positioning Mickey as a character just for kids. And they said "We want you to make the Mickey game that you want to make. Make Mickey a hero for the twenty-first century." Most of you probably knows what happened next. In July 2007 Walt Disney Co. officially acquired Junction Point Studios, to make them work on the Epic Mickey project. Spector's

vision for Epic Mickey was way different and darker than what was released in November 2010 as the final Wii game, but that's a story for another time. With the acquisition of Junction Point, all their previous IP were canned, to switch their efforts on the Mickey Mouse game. Sleeping Giants was lost and forgotten to make space for a more popular franchise. After releasing Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two in March 2012, Disney decided that they did not need Junction Point anymore and closed down the studio in January 2013. Unfortunately it seems that this time Spector was not able to reacquire the rights for Sleeping Giants or their other concepts. In May 2016 Spector wrote on Twitter: "Since Disney acquired @JunctionPoint they own my near-future action, modern day ninja & epic fantasy concepts. It'd be nice to get 'em back".

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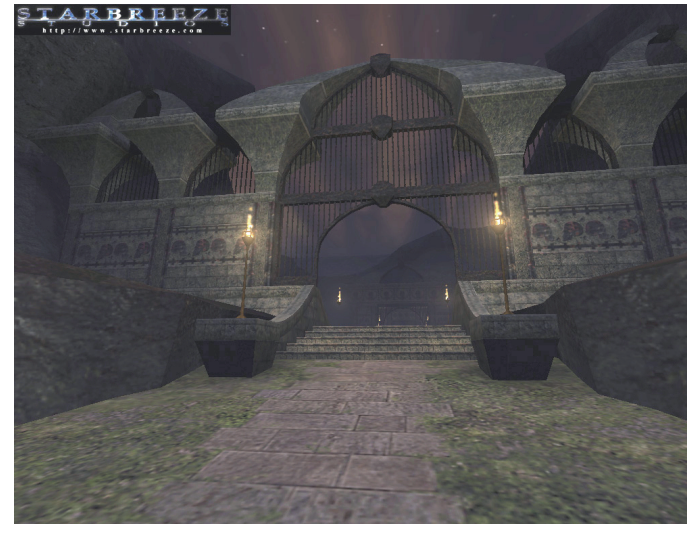
SORCERY

Article by: Branislav Mikulka

History of Starbreeze Studio's' debut game can be traced back to the early 90's. There, in Sweden, a group called Triton (known for the development of the musical tracker FastTracker 2) started developing a fantasy action game. This game was called "Into the Shadows" and a short demo was released in 1995, though it was scrapped two years later due to financial difficulties. Magnus Högdahl (creator and main programmer of Into the Shadows) decided to start his own project and began developing a completely new engine. His friend Gustaf Grefberg joined the project and began working on gameplay and design as soon as. They planned to create was a first-person action RPG, a mashup of Ultima Underworld, The Elder Scrolls, and Quake, under the name of "Sorcery." During 1998, Starbreeze presented a Sorcery demo along the game design proposal at E3 in Atlanta. They have caught they eye of Gremlin Interactive, who were immediately interested in what Sorcery had to offer. The official publishing deal was signed by the end of 1998, causing Starbreeze to hire more employees and officially begin development. Since the beginning, Starbreeze was a very technology oriented company. Magnus Högdahl, once quipped as the Swedish John Carmack, worked on the amazing proprietary OpenGL 3D engine. The engine both fast and highly detailed, something that was unheard of at the time. It had curved-surface capability that gave level designers variability in creating complex architectures. Included was also a support of recursive and movable mirrors and portals, volumetric fog, illuminated volumetric fog, skeletal animation, animated multi-texturing materials, dynamic lighting, day/night cycles, and many other features. To allow a certain level of adaptability of graphical and processing power demands, the user had the ability to adjust tesselation. Quite revolutionary for a small Swedish team in 1998. When it came to gameplay, Sorcery was designed as non-linear open world role playing game, using first person combat with heavy focus on spell-casting and innovative magical system. The in-game world was supposed to be extremely large and full of a variety of sidequests and optional missions for the player to explore. The game also had fully working network

multiplayer component that focused on the frantic action elements of the modern FPS. This included Capture the Flag and arena death-match game types, which drew heavy influence from Quake 2. One might say it was Quake with spells in medieval settings, but the game had much higher ambitions than a simple multiplayer clone. The story of the Sorcery followed a young magician whose goal was to stop the impending doom of the whole world. However, this was the part of the game that didn't progress as originally planned. Most of the story, dialogue, and quests were only on paper. Multiple spells were created, but skill, level, and inventory systems were all missing from the game. It is apparent that Starbreeze had strong technical and artwork skills, but their game was too ambitious for the size of the team. Morale at the time was very high and all employees were working hard towards creating a viable product. Mikael Walkhberg, a level designer, remembers how he was so motivated and inspired that he worked 3 days in a row without any real sleep. He just survived on milk chocolate drinks and sandwiches! But even with all the hard work the team put into the game, the lack of experience creating and shipping an actual AAA product took its toll. Game development had was delayed over and over again due to the constant addition of new features to the game at a variety of different stages of development. In 1999, Infogrames acquired Gremlin Interactive and they soon terminated the development contract for Sorcery. As one the developers explains it seems that Sorcery was competing against a similar project that Infogrames already had in it's development pipe (possibly Crusaders of Might and Magic, released for PC and Playstation in late 1999/early 2000). No company wants to have 2 competing products for the same consumers, so Sorcery had to be canned, even if it would have turned out to be a much different game. The whole team was crushed at this announcement and morale suddenly reached its lowest point. They still had high hopes for their project and continued to work on Sorcery for about 3 months without a publisher until the company was near bankruptcy. To avoid it, Starbreeze decided to merge with another nearby developer, O3 Games. O3 was at the time was working on real-time strategy game Outforce and, as a part of the merge, Starbreeze staff moved to their office in Uppsala to help. Sorcery had to finally be scrapped in order for Outforce to be published. Starbreeze eventually worked on another action RPG titled “Enclave,” originally published for PC and Xbox in mid 2002. The game was still a fantasy action game focusing on first person multiplayer combat (like Team Fortress 2) but less ambitious than Sorcery’s open world concept and complex magic system. While some of the concept art looked similar, the game was heavily cut and rushed by their new European publisher Swing! Entertainment; in the end, Enclave was changed into a single-player third-person hack ‘n slash, received with average reviews and low sales. The failure of the first game, along with legal troubles with their publisher, forced Starbreeze to cancel the planned sequel. While this had the potential to end the studio, salvation arrived in the form of a successful and acclaimed tie-in game: Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay, released in 2004 by Vivendi Games. After the success found with Riddick, Starbreeze was able to revive its finances and enhance their portfolio with well-known games like The Darkness, Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena,an action reboot of Syndicate, Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons, and the Payday series.



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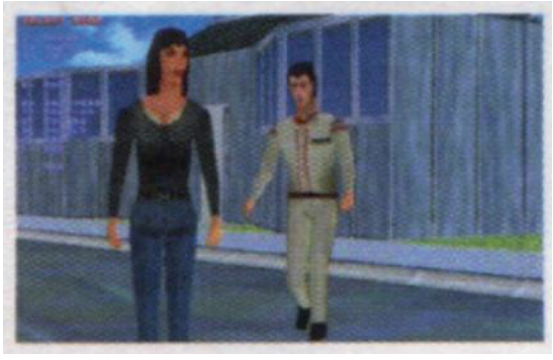
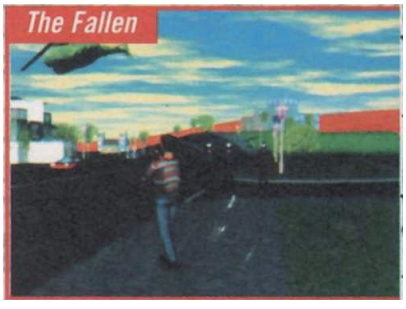
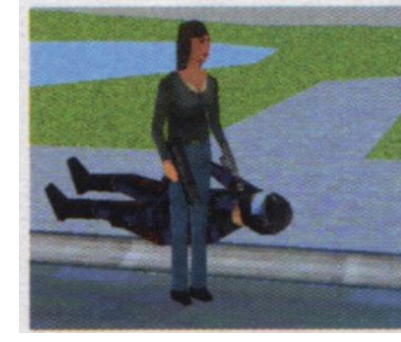
THE FALLEN





Article by: Branislav Mikulka

Picture an open world game with huge areas to explore. A game where you can drive any of the vehicles, enter any building or talk to any NPC by creating actual sentences. Imagine a futuristic gang war where your actions decide the outcome and you can do so with a variety of different approaches. Imagine a mashup of Deus Ex and Grand Theft Auto in the year 1996. Congratulations, you pictured the world of The Fallen! The Fallen was a game in production by Sensory Deception and to be published by Psygnosis during 1996/1997. It was a brainchild of David Anthony who founded Sensory Deception in 1994 with two of his childhood friends, Ste Pointon and Pete Smith, and an artist Leon Warren. The company never made it past its guerrilla days and the biggest headcount they ever had was only 6 people. Shortly before establishing Sensory Deception David Anthony finished a game for Psygnosis called Theatre of Death. During a meeting with the founder of Psygnosis, Ian Hetherington, David pitched his idea of The Fallen. David recalls from the meeting how Ian put a great deal of faith in him and how he was willing to take a risk in pursuit of a great title: "He really didn't have to offer me the contract but he did because he wasn't afraid to take a risk, like all great businessmen." The story told a futuristic tale of a corrupt government and its special police force called the Lords. On the other side of the spectrum were Angels. Angels were criminals specializing in the synthesizing of an electronic drug like implant called Angelica. These two factions were at constant war with each other causing a big strain on civilians. As civilians always took the biggest toll in damages and lost lives they are being referred to as the Fallen. The Fallen was originally supposed to be done from a 2D isometric point of view, in the style of Theatre of Death. However, the decision to also release the game on Playstation put a mandate on the development team to make the game in 3D. Dave didn't have any experience with 3D programming so he spent a lot of time gaining knowledge in the area. Retrospectively, he sees this as one of the many obstacles of development: "I wasted so much time trying to get up to speed on 3D programming, when really I should have hired a top notch programmer." Another big blocker causing delays was just the sheer amount of ambition that Sensory Deception had planned for their game. As described by David: "It was basically like a GTA V in terms of the ambition of its design, except there was also a dialog system where you could construct sentences to talk to characters". The concept behind The Fallen was to provide a basic framework where the player can do a lot of various tasks and game would react appropriately. The player was supposed to buy things in various shops (weapons, ammo etc.), drive various vehicles and encounter NPCs who are going about their daily life. As a sample situation, the player could witness a murder and decide to pursue a killer, report the incident or lie about the whole thing. As this design was incredibly ambitious for a handful of team members, especially as it was 20 years ago, almost nothing worked as it was originally intended. David's drive and determination pushed his abilities to the limit, but it was design that was just not implementable. They wanted to create an interactive open world game with much more freedom than what we can really play today in a standard sandbox title made by huge teams with higher technology. The final demo version of The Fallen right before the project cancellation allowed the player to enter vehicles, drive around, shoot random people, enter stores and do basic trades. According to Dave's own words, "...it was so full of holes it would never have held together, again because it was stupidly ambitious in



scope." However, Sensory Deception also achieved a few little wins along the way. The sentence creation system that they developed actually functioned to nearly its design specs, with conversations with NPCs to compose of words chosen by the player: it was pretty cool and innovative. It was apparently "stupidly clunky to use", but it is a shame it never saw the light of the day. Coincidentally, shortly after the demise of Sensory Deception David moved to Psygnosis Chester. At the time, they were working on a game called Sentient. This science fiction adventure game had a very similar conversation system that allowed the creation of sentences and NPCs behaved accordingly. David knew nothing about their system until he saw it, but noted it was shame there was not much cooperation and sharing between developers in the old days. There were also a few unreported features developers were exploring. These were probably deemed too futuristic even for the magazines to report about them. Namely one stood above everything else. Dave was actually thinking about implementing a speech recognition system. The reasoning behind it would be to actually speak the sentences instead putting them together manually, exactly like Siri does only 20 years sooner. After investing time in researching plugins and trying to leverage the technology he abandoned the idea. When asked if there was also a consideration of multiplayer David candidly said: "That's the one feature even I wasn't insane enough to try and pull off back then. But if I'd thought of it, I'd probably have added it to the list!" As every development team, even Sensory Deception had their fair share of crazy stories from behind the scenes. Sometime during the development, artist's hard drives failed and they lost a lot of work. Of course, everything was backed up on the server, but by a bizarre coincidence the server also failed and about 2 months of work were lost. No wonder the developers had to occasionally release some steam with some harmless experiments. One such experiment was emptying water cooler and pouring inside bottled Becks beers. This way they created a crude version of a beer dispenser and were ready to spend the night playing Micro Machines. In the end, The Fallen never made it past its initial single level demo and was cancelled after 2 and half years of development. The reasons why the project was cancelled are pretty obvious from the previous paragraphs. Even though the guys at Sensory Deception tried everything to make this project a reality they were just in over their heads and got lost in the enormous scope and ambition of the whole project. "I was completely out of my depth and too arrogant to throw my hands up and admit defeat. I worked relentlessly, 7 days a week, long days, but there was no way that game was going to make it. I learned a lot by going through that, it's just a shame that Psygnosis (and Mr. Hetherington) had to foot the bill for my lack of humility." – David about the project cancellation. Shortly afterwards Sensory Deception was no more. The development team split and they went their separate ways. You might wonder if after spending 2,5 years on a cancelled project developers had the energy and guts to continue working in the video game industry. If you check a list of titles Ste Pointon, Pete Smith and Leon Warren worked on you will notice they worked in any possible production position up to management levels. Their portfolios include such famous franchises as Wipeout, Need for Speed, Battlefield, Killzone, Little Big Planet or Lego video games. Last but not least, David Anthony eventually moved to Santa Monica, Los Angles and worked on a "small" game called "Call of Duty". Eventually, he became a director at Treyarch and his video game career peaked with writing, producing and directing of Call of Duty: Black Ops II that grossed over 1 billion dollars in 15 days. He has since set up a production company to develop movie and TV projects. What is the moral of this doomed enterprise then? The story of The Fallen is a story of the fall. Fall of a development house that tried to perform such a radical step in video gaming that it was decimated by its own ambition. Lack of experience, resources and progress must have had a great toll on everyone involved. But we should not forget, it is also a story of the phoenix rising. David and his team became prolific names in the videogame world. From his comments you can clearly see how he retrospectively sees his ambitions and how he built his experience, learned humility and worked towards delivering one of the best selling game ever produced. The Fallen is a testament that every now and then we have to face and endure personal failures and rise above them.

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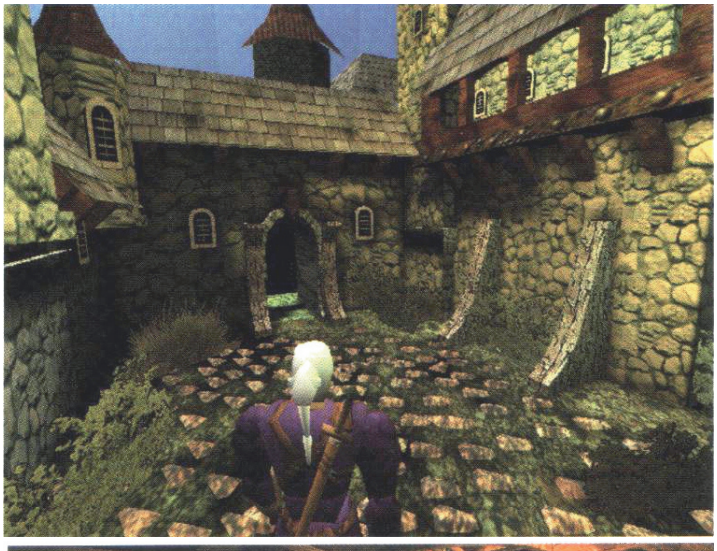
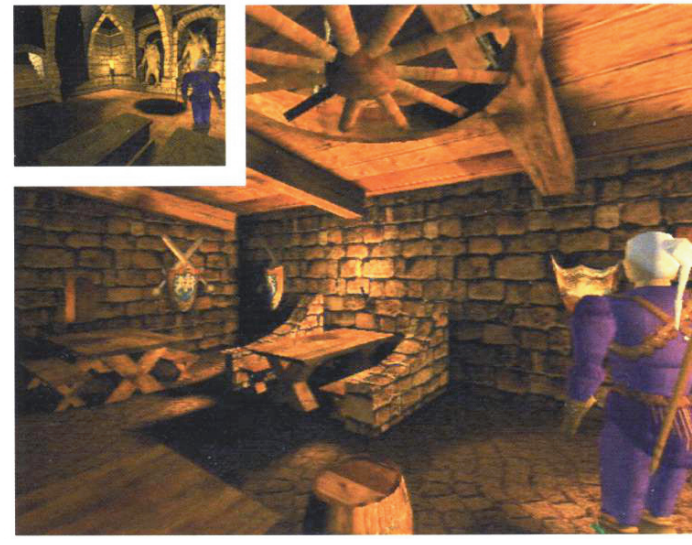
THE WITCHER



Article by: Tony Peters

The Witcher was a PC action RPG that - unlike the game series currently enjoying worldwide popularity - was not developed by CD Projekt RED for an October 2007 release. This version of The Witcher game for PC shares only the Polish country of origin and the source material of Andrzej Sapkowski's Wiedzmin book series with the widely known Witcher games series. Initially developed by Metropolis Software in 1996 and 1997, The Witcher was intended to be a 3D action / adventure title starring the books' protagonist: a Witcher known as of Geralt of Rivia. While never officially canceled, the game was eventually abandoned and the developer was eventually acquired by CD Projekt RED in 2009 during the development of The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings. Metropolis Software was formed in Poland in 1992 by two school friends, Adrian Chmielarz and Grzegorz Miechowski. They found initial success with their first release in 1993, the point-and-click games Tajemnica Statuetki (1993) and Teenagent (1995). Though these titles are rather unknown outside of their home country of Poland, they were highly successful in their home market, which helped Metropolis carve out a spot as one of the premiere Polish development houses. Riding this wave of success, Metropolis began looking toward their next projects. Four games made the cut: a shoot-'em-up named Katharsis, a role-playing game named Gorky 17, a beat-'em-up named Human Blood, and an action/adventure game based on a local book series named The Witcher. Metropolis co-creator Chmielarz served as lead on The Witcher, as well as being the primary creative force for the game during its development. Chmielarz was a huge fan of the Wiedzmin books and had become a casual acquaintance of Sapkowski's, thanks to their shared attendance of Sci-Fi conventions throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s. In an interview with Robert Purchese of Eurogamer, Chmielarz explained that the approachability of fellow convention attendees was atypical of the normally formal Polish culture. To be able to speak with a notable creator such as Sapkowski not as a celebrity but as a person, and to be treated the same in return, was a big deal to Chmielarz (not to mention other Polish fans). This familiarity allowed him to reach out directly to Sapkowski via a letter to discuss his desire to create a game based on the book series. The deal came together swiftly and a significant amount of money changed hands for the licensing rights in 1997 - a “good money for Poland [at the time],” Chmielarz noted. During this process, Chmielarz was the first to coin the term “Witcher,” thus creating the first English translation of the term “Wiedzmin.” Understanding the connotations of bringing up such an accomplishment, Chmielarz ruefully explained, "I don't want to sound like 'heyyyy, I'm that guy.' All I know is that at least he claimed that I was the one who proposed the title." Among the few remaining pieces of



evidence, the lost Metropolis' Witcher game existed is Chmielarz's record of this correspondence. But while the use of the Wiedzmin stories in a video game was discussed, the extent of the author's proposed participation in the project was left to assumptions. This did not pan out well for Chmielarz, as his assumption that Sapkowski would show some level of interest in game development proved false. He sent the author many letters (as Sapkowski refused to email his correspondence) and received nary an answer in return. As it became abundantly clear to Chmielarz that the game was nothing but a cash grab for Sapkowski, he was left feeling like Sapkowski didn't care much about the game. "All it was, was extra money to him, which is fine - totally fine," said Chmielarz. "I don't blame him. That's actually pretty smart." Development kept chugging along despite this initial annoyance and Chmielarz's Witcher began to take form. "The focus was on making it this 3D action / adventure that was, as we called it at the time - and again, I hate to use this term because it sounds pretentious - for adults." His sentiment is not without merit as the gaming landscape at that time did not possess a marketplace that had found a way to consistently monetize mature, story-driven games in the way that today's marketplace seamlessly does. Such games were exceptions long before their current position atop the throne. The Witcher game was to be a graphical tour-de-force, as plans were in place to push for dynamic 3D environments over pre-rendered backgrounds. The visuals were prioritized to set the game apart from other 3D offerings on the market at the time to bring to life the journeys of Geralt, protagonist of The Witcher series, in verbose detail. Chmielarz remembers it fondly, saying, "it was actually quite impressive for the time." In the few screenshots that exist, this attention can be best seen in the shot of the inn. Candles illuminate a room full of wooden tables and chairs and adorned with various coats of arms on the walls. Three visually distinct enemies surround Geralt as he begins swinging his sword in retaliation. Game play was to be a linear action / adventure style with light RPG elements - the exact opposite of the way CD Projekt Red's game balanced the two genres. Chmielarz explains that there was going to be an experience point system, limited branching choice system, and powers to learn and upgrade. The narrative, a retelling of Sapkowski's stories, was intended to keep the mature roots of its source material with featured moments where the player would make moral choices and interact with complex characters. "I know it sounds a little cliché or funny in 2014," Chmielarz says, "but in 1997 - 17 years ago - it wasn't really obvious. These things like moral choices or hard choices or slightly darker storytelling - it wasn't common. But that was the goal and it was all because of the quality of the source material - it inspired us to do something very special." Development, however, derailed before the game could come together. Despite finding a publisher in TopWare and releasing screenshots to press (such as Edge Magazine), The Witcher would find itself fighting against doubt from both parties. TopWare was unsure of the game's potential profitability, while Metropolis was struggling with technical hurdles and - possibly - Chmielarz's concerns over the international appeal. But truly damning was the simple fact that Metropolis had bitten off more than it could chew. Despite being a team of no more than 15, the developer was simultaneously working on 3 other games (Catharsis, Gorky 17, and Human Blood). Designing and developing a 3D action / adventure game when the company hadn't yet released anything but 2D games was an enormous undertaking, especially in the late '90s when 3D graphics were still in their gaming infancy. Throwing in the other factors, it was amazing the game got as far as it did. When push came to shove, The Witcher was a victim of the chopping block and was pushed aside. "There wasn't any drama," Chmielarz recalls. "It just kind of died." The game would find a chance to get back on the development horse a year later, and from this, a playable first chapter would emerge. But again, Metropolis' overflowing plate would pillage The Witcher of its workforce as it was moved to behind the schedule Gorky 17. What was supposed to be a delay of a few months would balloon to nine and The Witcher was left to lone wolf dust collecting. There would be no third chance for Chmielarz and Metropolis, as he would leave the company in 1999 and the developer never looked back. "With each passing year, The Witcher gathered more and more dust until it became clear it was never going to happen." The Witcher would remain untouched until 2002, when CD Projekt Red came knocking. Chmielarz remembers joking about being difficult in regards to giving up the license, but after CD

Projekt Red's Marcin Iwinski tracked down the rights after contacting a rather clueless Sapkowski on the matter, Metropolis signed the rights over. Today, Metropolis' The Witcher exists merely as a thing of legends. Chmielarz found the CD-ROMs containing the code and tried to use them only to find they were dead upon gaining access. "As it turns out, CDs actually don't hold all your data for 100 years." Outside of the memory of Chmielarz and the others who worked on the game with him, as well as the aforementioned press screenshots, Geralt's first digital adventure is now nothing more than digital sand lost under the ocean of gaming. While CD Project closed down Metropolis Software in 2009 when they were working on the now cancelled FPS "They", Adrian Chmielarz is leading hiss own indie studio "The Astronauts" and in 2014 released the acclaimed adventure game "The Vanishing of Ethan Carter".

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TORN

Article by: Philip Dempsey

Torn is a cancelled RPG that was being developed by cult-studio Black Isle Studios for the PC. Torn was a surprise announcement at GDC 2001, which was unusual at the time. Black Isle was riding high from the the critical successes of Planescape Torment and Icewind Dale and was looking to create a new fantasy RPG. Unlike those games however, Torn was going to be a new IP rather than a licensed game based off the Dungeons & Dragons franchise. The plot of Torn would have taken place in the Kingdom of Orislane and would follow a wanderer cursed to bring misfortune to any place they lingered in or any person that they stayed with for too long. After traveling through the continent of Agathe for several years, the wanderer heads towards Orislane trying to avoid his curse only to get swept up in the multiple plots going on in the kingdom. Character creation would have used the S.P.E.C.I.A.L system from the Fallout franchise. Like Fallout, Torn would not have character classes. Instead the player would be given the freedom to improve their character to their preference. The player's race would give them added bonuses, with races being the standard fantasy races: Elves, orcs, dwarfs, etc. However, Black isle promised to put a spin on them to make them stand out from the norm. Leveling up would give the player points which could be spent on improving skills ranging from weapon training to trap making and crafting. Perks, another element found in the Fallout franchise, would also be unlocked every few levels, adding another level of customization to the character building. Combat would be a mix of real time and turn-based combat with an option to pause to get better control of the situation. Party members would have action points which would dictate what they would be able to do and would refill

over time. The percentage of action points used would determine the rate of attack. Moving wouldn't use up action points but would stop regeneration until movement stopped. Switching weapons or using potions would reset the current pool of action points. Magic would have used five elements (Fire, water, earth, air and time) and then split into 4 types of magic: Order, Chaos, Alchemy and Summoning. Order magic focuses on healing, protecting and status buff type spells. While a lot of order spells were defensive in nature, it also included abilities like stopping time and petrifying an enemy in place to aid in combat. Chaos magic on the other hand would have more of a focus on offense with elemental spells, status ailments and the ability to charm and turn invisible to get an edge in combat. Alchemy would allow players to combine spells with items to power them up or with other spells to cause devastation. Alchemy would also allow the ability to repair damaged items, find hidden objects in the environment and the ability to create golems. Finally, Summoning magic was broken down into two types: Call spells and Gate spells. Call spells summoned a creature to do your bidding until it is killed, banished or uses up its power. Gate spells open a gate that allows something unnatural to come through. Summoning magic could be some of the most powerful in the game, but came at a heavy price of taking some health points along with magic points in order to complete the spell. Torn represented a brave new step for Black Isle as it was going to be their first fully 3d game with full camera controls, rather than the 2d fixed isometric view that had become the company's signature style. The companion system was intended to be one of the most complex Black Isle had ever worked on and would have been an expansion of the system found in Fallout 2. Allies would have been semi-autonomous, each with their own personality and skills that could improve or damage the makeup of the party. They could be given a variety of orders which could be modified, for example a healer helping the whole party or just one member. Since each companion had their own personality, finding the right members who worked together and pull off battle plans the most efficiently would be a constant consideration. An Interview with with one of the developers, David Maldonado, in April of 2001 stated that Torn had been in development for 14 months. Torn was playable at E3 2001 and while it was reported to look unpolished due to a recent change to the LithTech 3.0 engine, the game had a very positive reception. At the time, the team felt that the change of engine would only be a minor road bump towards completion. A release date of sometime in the 4th quarter of 2001 was planned, however rumors were circling that Torn had run into problems. By July it had become clear that the rumors were true and the game was canceled, and some of the Black Isle team were let go as a result. The reason for the cancellation didn't become public knowledge until a year later in 2002. According to Feargus Urquhart, the game was still 8 months away from completion. The issues with the LithTech engine turned out to be much larger than first believed and even with support from LithTech engineers they couldn't solve the problems. With problems growing within Black isles's Parent company Interplay, it was decided that extra time could not be spared to finish the game. Problems for Black Isle and Interplay would continue to grow over the coming years until Black Isle was forced to close in 2003 during the development of Fallout 3 (Also known as Van Buren at the time) leaving the game unfinished. Many members of Black Isle studios would go on to create Obsidian Entertainment, who would work on games such as South Park: The Stick of Truth and Pillars of Eternity, a 2015 game that is a nod to Obsidian's past games like Planescape Torment. In 2013, Interplay

revived the Black Isle brand name and announced Project V13, a project that started its life as Fallout Online, but it's currently unknown if V13 will ever be completed.

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ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE: ORIGIN

Article by: Daniel Fox

Since the release of the first game in 1981, the Ultima series has been one of the most groundbreaking and influential in the realm of western role-playing games. Under the direction of renaissance man Richard "Lord British" Garriott, the series eventually grew to span nine main games and numerous spin-offs. Of these many entries, few were as far-reaching and world-changing as Ultima Online. Released by Origin Systems in 1997, Ultima Online helped bring into reality a dream that had captivated the minds of game designers since the medium's inception: that of a truly living, breathing online game world. Though not the first massively multiplayer online game, (that honour arguably goes to 1978's "Multi-User Dungeon") it is credited both with popularizing the genre and creating the term "Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game", MMORPG for short. Together with Neverwinter Nights, Everquest, and The Realm Online, the game revolutionized the landscape of social play and paved the way for several future generations of highly-profitable services such as Blizzard's ubiquitous World of Warcraft. Ultima Worlds Online: Origin, which was known as the more straightforward Ultima Online 2 during early stages of development, was set to be the true sequel to Ultima Online. This anticipated follow-up was announced in 1999 and set to be released within two years of its formal reveal before its cancellation on March 21, 2001. Rather than the isometric two-dimensional graphics of its predecessor, Origin was set to feature a fully three-dimensional interactive world for its players to explore. Starr Long, longtime right-hand man of series creator Richard Garriott, was tasked with leading the development team. Long had previously worked at Origin Systems, doing quality assurance for earlier titles in the Ultima series before working his way up to larger roles. He began to gain significance both within the games as the character "Lord Blackthorn" and as a lead producer on Ultima IX before being promoted to lead director for the original Ultima Online. Long and his team had many ambitious plans for Ultima Online's successor. Aside from the vast graphical improvements, it was set to feature steampunk aesthetics and themes of industrial revolution made possible by a plot in which the past, present, and future of the world of Sosaria are brought together through fantastical magic. This broadening of scope would have made it possible

for players to play as two distinct fantasy races - the technologically advanced Juka and the mystical Meer - in addition to the standard human warriors. Non-player characters were also planned to incorporate very early motion-capture animation intended to bolster the lived-in atmosphere of the game's three fantasy realms. Between the impressive preview footage, which made use of edgy music courtesy of the underground band Grim Faeries, and the pedigree of the design team at Origin Systems, enthusiasts' anticipation was at a fever pitch by the time the project's cancellation came to light. Electronic Arts, which had recently acquired Origin Systems, did what they usually do to a new influx of talent: cut large swaths of jobs, leaving an in-name-only husk behind. After nearly 200 positions were eliminated, said husk went to work supporting the main Ultima Online game. Shortly after the ambitious sequel was put on ice, Richard Garriott and Starr Long jumped ship to work on competing game Tabula Rasa. This dynamic duo has collaborated several times since, in between Garriott's surprisingly-frequent space voyages, and have enjoyed success on Kickstarter with their pitch for a spiritual successor to the Ultima series known as Shroud of the Avatar.

As for Origin Systems, supporting the main Ultima Online game would be their primary focus for several years after the demise of Origins. However, they took a stab at a sequel one more time with Ultima X: Odyssey, the cancellation of which proved to be the final nail in the studio's coffin in 2004. Of some consolation is the fact that many of the ideas planned for these games managed to see the light of day; the gameplay elements intended for the follow-ups were incorporated into Ultima Online which has continued to evolve up to and including the present day. Meanwhile, the story elements from planned in-game scenarios were converted into the a trilogy of novels dubbed The Technocrat War by Austen Andrews. Fans of the series were even treated to cross-pollination between the two, as elements from these books were tied into Online via an expansion known as Lord Blackthorn's Revenge. Meanwhile, MMORPGs had become the new hot thing in the games industry. Juggernauts like Square-Enix and SEGA were expanding into the online space with social versions of Final Fantasy and Phantasy Star. By the time this gold rush saw the green hills of MMOtown mined bare, Ultima Online was left standing on very little of the ground it had once helped break. Blizzard's release of World of Warcraft brought irrevocable changes to the online gaming space and thusly holds the distinction of being synonymous with the genre, much like Ultima in its glory days. Though Electronic Arts keeps the Origin Systems legacy "alive" by utilizing its name for their digital content distribution service, the actual talent within the studio was largely scattered to the wind. Ultima Worlds Online: Origins ultimately serves as a reminder that even the most high profile series can collapse under the pressure of bureaucratic blunders and overinflated project goals. Its death even heralded the modern-day modus operandi at Electronic Arts, in which talent and intellectual property are treated as toys to be bent and broken at the whims of its myriad stuffed suits. From these perspectives Origins serves as an extremely important plot-point in the overall history of games as an artform. It's impossible to tell if, in the alternate universe where it saw release, the finished game would have been as interesting as the tale of its death. Sometimes, the most interesting things in life and art are the unseen.

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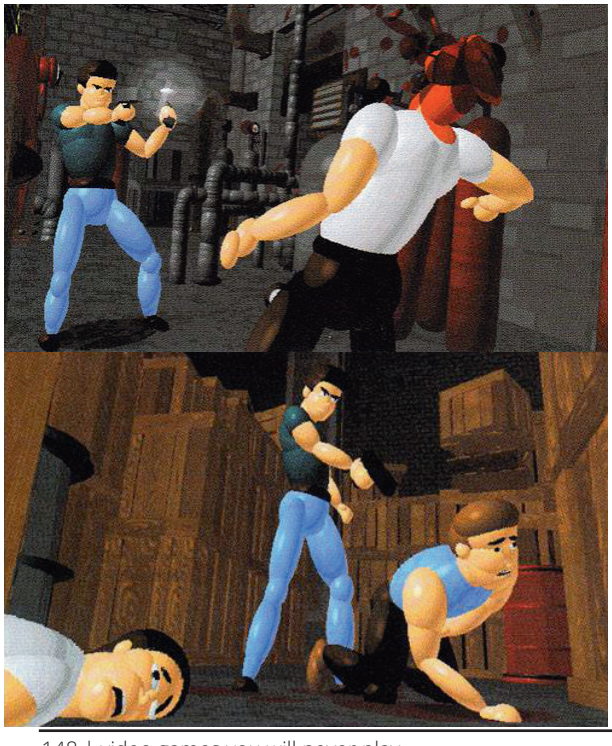
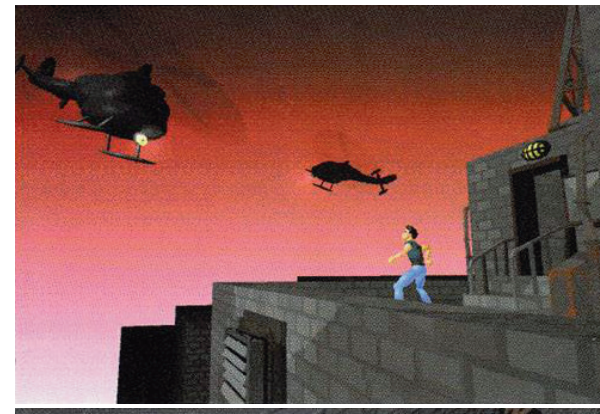
URBAN DECAY

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Urban Decay was an ambitious and controversial action game that was being developed in the mid-90's by Andrew Spencer Studios and was planned to be published in 1996 by Psygnosis for PC. At the time, the studio was mostly known for their fantasy adventure game, Ecstatica (released in 1994), developed with a particular graphic technology that used ellipsoids, instead of polygons, to model 3D characters, making them to look like balloon puppets. Urban Decay's gameplay would have been focused on gunplay combat and reckless escapes from enemies in a modern urban setting, exploring mean streets, warehouses and rooftops. This was a major change from Ecstatica and its medieval setting with survival horror gameplay and puzzles. The team declared that movies by such directors as John Woo and Quentin Tarantino were the main inspirations for the game: fast paced action and over the top violence, with splatter effects and gruesome death animations. They also wanted to add some stealth elements by letting players kill enemies from behind without being noticed. The plot of Urban Decay would have focused around a hard-boiled man being chased by the police and various criminals, while having to violently defend himself from attacks by both factions. The team planned to create a 3D open world city to explore, filled with danger and neutral or friendly NPCs to interact with. Players had to pay attention to move around open areas, as the main character was a wanted man and could have been hunted down by SWAT teams at any moment. If only released in 1996, Urban Decay's free roaming 3D world with violent, realistic gameplay would have been revolutionary and highly controversial for sure. Popular urban sandbox games, such as the first GTA, would have not been published until 1997, and we had to wait until GTA3 in 2001 for a 3D incarnation. It's easy to understand how Urban Decay could have changed the history of videogames and why it was so hyped by PC gamers at the time. Unfortunately, development of such an ambitious project fell into troubles: while ellipsoid models were quite impressive in the early '90s, polygons took the lead as the main form of 3D entertainment. After a good amount of work was already done with ellipsoid, the studio decided to switch the engine to a polygonal one that could have modeled more realistic characters. That was probably the first mistake in a long series of problems that destroyed the project. Soon the main creative designer behind Urban Decay left the team and the studio relationship with Psygnosis became hostile. The open world concept was much more difficult to create than what the team originally thought, and their publisher was more interested in seeing a sequel to an existing product (Ecstatica 2, released in 1997) than a new, controversial game that could have cost too much and easily fail. Unfortunately, Ecstatica 2 did not sell as expected and Psygnosis probably decided to not publish other games made by the studio. The best way to describe what we have lost with the cancellation of Urban Decay is to allow the people that worked on, or played it, share their memories. Ken Doyle, former developer at Andrew Spencer Studios, explained to us by email: "The ol memory's a bit dim but basically various issues assailed and eventually sunk the project. Firstly the main creative and design force behind the game, a guy called Eamonn Butler left to pursue a successful career at Disney. He became frustrated with endless requests for design and style changes. It was originally due to be an ellipsoid game but later changed over to a more regular poly look for the sake of realism. Urban Decay was shelved so work on Ecstatica 2 could





begin. We returned to Urban Decay but the studios relationship with Psygnosis soured and that was that. Studio closed and we all moved on. That's about it." Former Psygnosis' composer Mike Clarke wrote a comment about Urban Decay on the old "PC Games That Weren't" website: "Ah yes, Urban Decay. [...] There were loads of tech demos done and the game looked amazing. It was still a bit "Alone in the Dark" in parts with fixed camera locations, but was very good. It was pretty much the first proper adult game I'd seen, with swearing and "proper" violence in it. The stuff I saw was character anims synced to voice overs, some rag-doll demos (guy would fall down a set of stairs after you shot him), and a warehouse scene where you could stealthily walk up to someone from behind and slit their throat, or lean out from behind crates shooting with a gun in each hand. The only thing that I remember hearing was that they couldn't make a good enough game out of it. They had all of these bits and pieces of "cool stuff", but took too long to get anything together into a coherent whole. It was a great shame because it was the game that I was looking forward to the most out of all of the games of that era." Kirsten Van Schreven, former layout and background designer at Andrew Spencer Studios, worked on Urban Decay along with her husband, Eamonn, and remembered that in the end, the project was definitely canned in favor of a third, lost chapter in the Ecstatica series: "Andrew was a very talented programmer but didn't necessarily have a great business or creative head. He wanted a very open ended game without structure and Psygnosis weren't keen on this. We worked on it for over a year and it was very exciting...we were being touted as the next big thing, unofficially it was given game of the show at the very first E3 by the trade magazines when a playable demo level was shown at an invitation only event. Eventually my husband and I left as we were headhunted and went to work in L.A... my husband as Head of Animation at Walt Disney Feature Animation and I ended up as production designer on the Spyro the Dragon for Insomniac. [....] so basically Andrew lost the core team when we went as I was production / layout and background designer and my husband, Eamonn Butler, was animation designer... we both, along with Alain Maindron, worked on the game design. [...] We were a very small team initially... Andrew, Alain and my husband and I. We did expand just before we left for the U.S, hiring three junior Irish animators - Ken Doyle, Dave Lowry and Colin McEvoy. We had worked with Alain before in feature animation so we were a great team... it was lots of fun. [...] Eventually the game Urban Decay was abandoned in favor of another sequel to the Ecstatica franchise, which was also cancelled. The studio was disbanded shortly thereafter." After working as Animation Supervisor at Walt Disney on such films as Chicken Little, Dinosaur, and Fantasia 2000, in 2006 Eamonn Butler left Disney to join Double Negative VFX in London and today he works as Head of Animation at Cinesite for such movies as Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Iron Man 2 and Edge of Tomorrow. Kirsten Van Schreven-Butler worked globally in pre-production and design in both the feature film and video games industry, along with her own painting exhibitions at the New Metropole Arts Centre, the Bankside Gallery and the Fairfax Gallery. Ken Doyle still works as an animator and artist on games such as Reign of Fire, Terror Strike and Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft. Alain Maindron went to work with such studios as Shiny Entertainment, Arkane Studios and Zoink AB, creating art for such titles as Messiah, Arx Fatalis, Dark Messiah: Might and Magic and Stick it to The Man. Andrew Spencer is currently working as a programmer at the Dynamics Research Group of the University of Sheffield: he had left game development after the closure of his studio.

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WARCRAFT ADVENTURES

Article by: Brendan Hesse

In 1996, just a few months after shipping Beyond the Dark Portal, the expansion pack for the fantasy RTS game Warcraft II, the development team at Blizzard Entertainment began work on a follow up title, Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans. The team was headed by Bill Roper - who had worked as producer, designer, and executive producer on Warcraft I, Warcraft II, and Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal, respectively - and Chris Metzen, a creator of the Warcraft universe. The duo had also worked together in creating the Diablo universe for Blizzard North as well. The team got to work outlining the story for the game. Unlike the previous games in the Warcraft series, which were fantasy real-time strategy games, Warcraft Adventures was set to be a point-and-click style adventure game following a young Orc character named Thrall. Players would have controlled Thrall on his quest. Gameplay would have unfolded in a similar fashion as Lucasarts and Sierra's adventure games, where items are collected and used to solve obstacles and puzzles. In leaked footage of the near-completed game, an example of such a puzzle involves Thrall utilizing steam from a hot spring to melt a block of ice housing the battle axe of his father, Durotan, warchief of an Orc clan known as the Frostwolves. Blizzard's primary contribution for the game was story development. The scenario and plot were constructed by Metzen and Roper, and a script was written. Blizzard also recorded the sound for the game, including sound effects and dialogue. Interestingly, Bill Roper had previously been producer on all voice acting for the Warcraft series prior to Warcraft Adventures. However, due to Roper not being a union actor, he could not contribute voices to the game -- at least not the main voices. Instead, voice actors such as Clancy Brown, Peter Cullen, and Tony Jay were tapped for the roles of main character Thrall, Ogrim Doomhammer the Orc warchief , and Drek'Thar the Shaman, respectively. Meanwhile, main development was outsourced to an outside company. The lion's share of development was taken up by Animation Magic, an animation studio located in both Cambridge, Massachusetts America, and St. Petersburg, Russia. Animation Magic had over 100 artists and animators create the art of the game, including over twenty two-minutes worth of 2nd animation sequences. The studio was also responsible for coding the game engine and implementing the sound effects. Animation Magic is also the studio known for the Legend of Zelda spin-off CDI games, Link: The Faces of Evil, and Zelda: Wand of Gamelon, two ill-fated titles that garnered negative reaction due to low quality and major departures in tone, gameplay style, and aesthetics from the main Legend of Zelda series. Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans is said to have had the same darkly comedic tone as the series, melding the brutal realities medieval combat with the whimsy of its high fantasy setting. The storyline of the game was going to cover Thrall's rise from lowly slave for Lord Blackmoore to Chieftain of the Orc horde. This story is quite important to the broader Warcraft lore, as Thrall is a prominent character in later Warcraft games including Warcraft III and World of Warcraft. Following the defeat of the Orcs and the source of their demonic powers in the previous Warcraft games, the massive green-skinned barbarians were rounded up and enslaved by the Alliance - a

coalition between Men, Dwarves, Elves, and Gnomes. Thrall, a young Orc slaved from a tribe of exiled Orcs who chose not to indulge in the demonic magic of their brethren, finds himself on a quest to find his fellow tribesmen and united the clans of the Orc Horde under his leadership as Warchief. After the announcement of Warcraft Adventures, fans were looking forward to playing the next entry in the Warcraft story and learning the story of Thrall. Blizzard originally had slated the release of the game in the fourth quarter of 1997. However, as development progressed, the release date was delayed by nearly a year to late 1998. The cause for the delay came in part to unforeseen technical difficulties with the project. In addition, communication between Blizzard and Animation Magic was proving difficult. Despite these obstacles, Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans was nearly complete after over a year of development. The engine was built, art and animation were complete, the puzzles and gameplay designed, and the dubbing recorded, but Blizzard was concerned about the quality of the game. In an effort to ensure high quality, Blizzard hired Steve Meretzky to work with the design team in reviewing Warcraft Adventures' puzzles so that they better fit the flow of the storyline. Meretzkey had designed the adventure games A Mind Forever Voyaging, The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, and the Spellcaster series. After two weeks, Meretzky and team has come to the conclusion that large sections of the game needed to be reworked or completely rewritten, which would require new animation and and voice acting. Compared to competing adventure games from Lucas Arts, such as Curse of Monkey Island 3 and Grim Fandango, Blizzard ultimately decided that Warcraft Adventures was lagging behind the competition in terms of gameplay and visuals. Thus, after well over a year of development - including magazine spots, massive fan hype, and a nearly complete game - Warcraft Adventures was officially cancelled just the day before E3 of that year. Immediately following the game's cancellation, fans took to the internet, creating an online petition for Blizzard to release the game anyway. Fans were disappointed that the game was cancelled, and many were nervous this meant the end of the Warcraft universe. On May 1998, Blizzard sent out an official statement regarding the cancellation of the game. Blizzard explained that the choice the cancel the game was difficult, but that in the end was the correct choice, as the high standard of quality Blizzard was known was the main factor in terminating the game's development. Blizzard assured fans that they would be returning the the Warcraft series soon, and that the story of Warcraft would continue. Considering the story of Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans to be an important part of the Warcraft canon, Blizzard had all written material for the game handed over to author and Star Trek novelist Christie Golden to adapt into a book. Golden was given just six weeks to write the novel, but the story was written on time, and published as Warcraft: Lord of the Clans. The book covers the storyline of Warcraft Adventures. Four years later in 2002, Blizzard would continue the story of Thrall and the world of Azeroth with Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos. While the development may have been frustrating, and the decision to cancel difficult, Warcraft Adventures in many way brought about the success of Blizzard's later games. The course of events played out in such a way that Blizzard created the successful RTS game Reign of Chaos and it's expansion pack Frozen Throne, the games that provided the narrative groundwork for Blizzard's juggernaut MMORPG, World of Warcraft. Just a few days before this book was completed, someone leaked online the pre-release version of Warcraft Adventure.

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ZOIKS! (PANDEMONIUM)

Article by: Branislav Mikulka

Ocean Software, the Manchester-based company best known for its movie license games and ports, stood before a turning point during early to mid-1990s. With the emergence of 32/64-bit gaming, there was a need for a more professional approach to game development - Gone were the days of bedroom developers. To survive in the modern games industry, Ocean decided to create Tribe; a concept that supported small internal independent development hubs. The role of these hubs was to break the constant cycle of ports that Ocean produced and instead, focus on original titles and unique experiences. Unfortunately, before Tribe's work could bear fruit, Infogrames stepped in and bought Ocean Software. All of their projects were cancelled except two - With only one of those (Silver, a European take on the Japanese RPG genre) actually ending up on store shelves. Some say that the Tribe concept was just the marketing ploy used to inflate the value of Ocean assets before the acquisition, which may be nothing more than a rumour. Sadly, we will probably never know the truth. What we are left with is a legacy of ambitious, albeit unfulfilled projects, with one of the most promising projects being based on the animated works of Hanna-Barbera. Project Pandemonium, later renamed to Zoiks around the time of E3 1996, was originally conceived as an edutainment title for children. Since its inception, the project hit a roadblock almost immediately. While the design team wanted to create an edutainment title they realised that they had no real experience in developing them. It turned out that they had no real idea of what was involved in developing a good edutainment title and only a few of the team members actually had kids. It was a difficult concept to grasp: What would kids find entertaining? What age group should they reach out to? Many questions without good answers led the team to a make the decision to focus on creating a traditional 2D Point & Click adventure game for everyone. As for this game's moniker, Zoiks was actually a mistake, a word that was lost in translation. The whole development team thought that "Zoinks!", the popular phrase of Scooby-Doo's Shaggy, was actually spelt as Zoiks. But as production progressed, the name stuck and became part of a marketing plan. In the spirit of Tribe's approach of standardising processes, a lot of time was invested into the project's pre-production. Before a development team was assigned to work on the game, a design team created concepts and fleshed out the ideas months before any actual coding took place. Once development teams became available, storyboards were created and work on the engine started. Zoiks, being an adventure game, was a scene-based title and therefore pretty easy to storyboard. A basic coding framework was created that allowed developers to describe the scene, placement of the objects and define interactive paths and concepts. Of cousre, the main selling point for the project was supposed to be the usage of Hanna-Berbera characters, alongside the multimedia possibilities

available, thanks to the advent of CD-ROM technology. The main team consisting of Gerald Weatherup (Project Lead), Sam Evens (Game Designer) and Nichola Whitworth (Project Manger), who put together a plan that was supposed to utilise the Hanna-Barbera license as best as possible. When the storyboarding was done, a 300 page script was written, complete with branching dialogue. The main story involved almost all major characters from Hanna-Barbera's beloved cartoons, Fred Flintstone, Scooby-Doo, Shaggy, Barney, Mutley, Penelope Pitstop and as the main antagonist, the scheming Dick Dastardly. Dastardly invents the machine that sucks up all sound from the cartoon land and players have to stop him by saving cartoon characters and bringing them together to create the ultimate team of animated heroes. Hanna-Barbera were heavily involved in the develpment process, and insisted on seeing everything upfront and having approval for every aspect of the game. To the developers surprise, even some questionable scenes were approved, including a scene where one of the characters was sitting at the sharp point of the metal torture pyramid, with weights tied to each leg that slowly pulled them down. When the script, storyboards, and usage of assets were all confirmed work on the game started in full capacity. To keep visual fidelity of the original cartoons, Ocean decided to use traditional 2D animation techniques. They hired a team of artists and animators who had extensive experience in the animation industry. Many of them worked on classic British cartoons like Count Duckula and Danger Mouse and one of the artists also previously worked at Disney. All backgrounds and items were created by hand painting on canvas and then scanning, while characters were animated with the standard cinematic frame rate of 24 frames per second in mind. Animators then created pencil outlines using light boxes and other animation techniques, which were ultimately scanned and imported into computer animation packages so that these hand-drawn assets could be brought to life. To match the visual presentation the development team borrowed heavily from Hanna-Barbera's sound library. Musicians and sound effect engineers were granted access to this massive library, but as sound effects and music were last things to be added to the game, they were never fully implemented. Finally, to create an authentic Hanna-Barbera experience, about 3 weeks voice recording took place at Hanna-Barbera Studios in California, Paris and Berlin to record the dialogue in multiple languages. The team worked on Zoiks! for over a year. While the engine needed a few tweaks, all scenes were drawn and work was steadily moving forward when eventual layoffs struck. Three quarters of Tribe were let go at the time of the takeover by Infogrames, while Ocean were also in the middle of financial troubles in the lead-up to the takeover, massively reducing the morale of the team. Just a few months after the acquisition, Zoiks! was cancelled. However, it was not all gloom and doom for Tribe, as there were good times to the development process at Ocean. Gerald Weatherup recalls a funny story back from the days he spoke of meeting with Tony Blair: "The team met Tony & Cherie Blair and presented them with some artwork designed for them by the animation team. It was part of the Labour tour of Britain before Tony became Prime Minister. It was a press extravaganza, and Ocean created a fake office in an empty building to fit all the press and cameras in. I remember Tony playing a football game with one of the testers, and much to the testers delight and the laughs of everyone around the tester was playing to win, Tony didn't stand a chance." After the fall of Ocean Software and Tribe, Gerald became a software engineer in the Telecom sector, while many of Zoiks! artists used their knowledge in and out of the animation and video games industries. At the time, they invested their time in learning Lightwave and 3D modeling as next logical step for nurturing their talents in bringing the next generation of entertainment. As for Zoiks!, somewhere out there in the wild are complete and fully fleshed out storyboards, as well as a version of the game with a majority of graphics already done, featuring a complete voice over. With just a few additional months of development, and it might have been completed. But cost-cutting measures and managerial decisions can kill any project, even the ones that have the highest hopes behind them.

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We would like to thank Gerald Weatherup for sacrificing his own free time and providing invaluable information about this forgotten project.

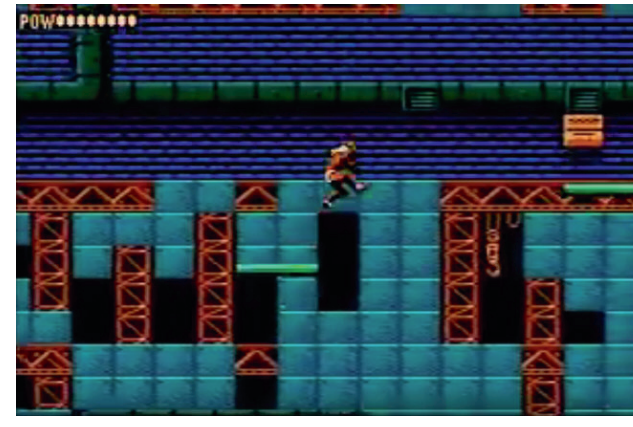
NES (Famicom)

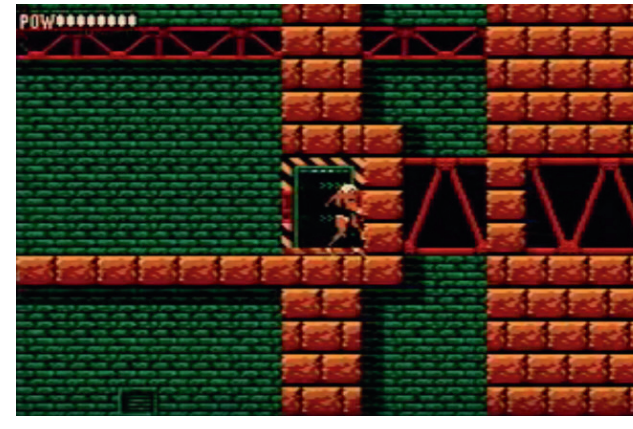
Article by: Lee Garbutt

There are few gaming systems as important or as influential as the Nintendo Entertainment System. Released in Japan as the Famicom, or Family Computer, in 1983, Nintendo's 8-bit system would find its way to Western shores as the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), initially available in North America in 1985, before reaching Europe in 1986 and other territories thereafter. Despite the initial version of the Famicom falling foul of a bad chipset, prompting a product recall, the system would prove to be a massive success in Japan, meaning a Western release was a no-brainer. To understand how important this system is to the videogames industry, you have to look at what was happening at that time. While the gaming markets in Japan and Europe were relatively healthy, thanks to microcomputers such as the Commodore 64, MSX and Spectrum ZX - the same could not be said in North America, as the now infamous market crash of the early 80's was in full swing. An oversaturation of poor software led to a lack of confidence in gaming as a lasting entertainment medium, dismissed as little more than a fad. To cut a long story short, the NES changed all that, as Nintendo successfully safeguarded their system from the failures of previous consoles, implementing a variety of almost draconian practices to ensure that the quality of software available was at a high standard, such as restricting publishers on the number of games they could release in a year. It single-handedly revived the games industry in North America, opening the floodgates for other companies to try (and for the most part, fail) to take a piece of Nintendo's majority market. How ironic it was that the NES was almost distributed by Atari - the company at the focus of the games market crash in the first place - before the deal eventually fell through over an agreement that Nintendo had with Coleco over the home version of Donkey Kong. First party titles such as Super Mario Bros. (1985) and Legend of Zelda (1986) as well as third party hits such as Castlevania (1986) and Mega Man (1987), were just some of the highlights of an absolutely gargantuan software library for the time, totalling at approximately 800 NES titles and 1000 Famicom releases. The NES was the console to develop for, and the console to buy, without a shadow of a doubt. It would be hard to list all the classic titles released for the NES, but a few of the most popular ones are Xevious (1983), Excitebike (1984), Bomberman (1985), Metroid (1986), Ghosts 'n Goblins (1986), Dragon Warrior (1986), TwinBee (1986), Kid Icarus (1986), Punch-Out!! (1987), Final Fantasy (1987), Metal Gear (1987), DuckTales (1989), Tetris (1989) and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1989). It was the console that tried to do things differently. You likely already know about accessories such as the Zapper, Power Glove and Robot Operating Buddy (ROB), but did you know that a NES-compatible knitting machine was planned? These are just a few examples of Nintendo thinking out of the box and driving their own path through a still relatively-new market. From its first batch of launch games in 1985 (including Super Mario Bros., Duck Hunt, Excitebike and Ice Climber) to its final release in 1995 (Wario's Woods), the NES dominated the market, and its legacy as a cultural icon has never been stronger. "Nintendo" was the name used to describe any gaming device, until well into the mid-90's, and its imprint onto the late 80's / early 90's zeitgeist was so strong that it was reported that in North America, more children recognised Super Mario than the American president or Mickey Mouse. It was Nintendo's largest selling home console ever with sales of around 61.91 million units, a record that remained unbroken until the release of the original Wii, two decades later. The iconic image of the NES controller is burned into the minds of anyone who grew up in the 8-bit era, and to this day adorns t-shirts, belt buckles and even the skin of those who grew up with the system. If you needed further convincing, then ponder this statement: without the Nintendo Entertainment System, the games industry as you know it would be a different place. Where would Super Mario be? Would the PlayStation exist? Would you even be reading this book? Granted, while it's arguable that the North American videogame market would have eventually picked itself up, it's unlikely that it would have been anywhere near as big as it is now, if it wasn't for Nintendo's little grey box. Even with such a massive success, there are still a lot of failures to be listed among the history of the Nintendo Entertainment System. Plenty of gaming studios tried to get a piece of the Nintendo cake and to develop new games for the console. They often took popular cartoon IPs to create an easy hit, or invested in their own "saturday morning cartoon" inspired characters that could have become the next '80s gaming icons. In other cases, ambitious role playing games and new gameplay ideas were conceived, but in the end a lot of them never saw the light of day. As it will happen many times in this book, for such an "old" Japanese console as the Famicom / NES, not much info is still available today for a lot of these lost 8-bit video games. The passing of time, the difficulties to get our hands on old Japanese magazines from the '80s, the language barriers or even the current age of people that developed these projects at the time and are not easily reachable online, are some of the causes for more and more NES games to be forgotten forever. In the following pages, we'll have a quick look at some of the most meaningful and curious titles that define what kind of cancelled NES games were not meant to be.

BIO FORCE APE

Article by: Damiano Bacci





Bio Force Ape is an unreleased action game that was in development for the NES by SETA Corporation (SETA being an acronym for "Super Entertainment Total Amusement"), a now-defunct semi-obscure Japanese video game company that developed titles such as Nosferatu and The Wizard of Oz for the SNES. Bio Force Ape was first shown at the Consumer Electronics Show in June 1991. It was previewed for western audiences in issue 27 (August '91) of Nintendo Power (an earlier preview was discovered by Chris Covell in an issue of Famitsu), and it was claimed to have "the fastest action ever on the NES." The plot revolved around a genetically mutated monkey on a mission to rescue a scientist and his (presumed) daughter from an evil mad scientist. The preview also mentioned the ability to perform wrestling moves on "bizarre enemies." Bio Force Ape was put on hold in 1992, as announced in issue 35 (April 1992) of Nintendo Power, despite the claim that "the development is complete." A playable cartridge of the game surfaced in March 2010 in a Yahoo! Japan auction, although it was far from being a complete version. Thanks to a community effort organized by Frank Cifaldi of LostLevels.org, the game was purchased for 250,000 yen (approximately $2,700) and subsequently dumped, and the ROM was released to the public. The plot is shown briefly via a few still sprites in the opening menu, and then we see the "Bio Force Ape" being pushed from a building by a sumo wrestler as the mad scientist looms over the scene with the kidnapped girl in his hands. The ape falls down the building, and we can catch a glimpse of the character's very smooth animation. The player has an entire range of moves: punches, kicks, and the ability to grab enemies and show them his wrestling moves. The game's scrolling is indeed very fast, but the poor controls make the platforming portions of the game difficult. Along the way, you meet a set of truly "bizarre enemies" (shown in the cover art of the game), a strange combination of men and animals such as a man with an alligator jaw for legs and a tail as his hair (words don't do it justice, it must be seen first-hand!), but also regular enemies such as stereotypical kung fu warriors and ninjas. The game has only three levels, all of which are fairly bland and maze-like. The first is a mix of platforming and fighting and features speeding platforms and elevators to navigate, while in the second level, coal cars are used to move around different areas in which you must fight enemies to advance. At the end of the first two levels, you rescue the girl and the scientist, respectively. In the third and final level, you have to activate switches and use teleporters to find the mad scientist, who awaits you near a giant grey missile. He then turns into an exact replica of the player-controlled ape but, in a tremendous letdown, can be taken down with just one hit, after which you revert to your original monkey form. There is no official explanation for the cancellation of Bio Force Ape, but we can speculate that, with the SNES already released in Japan and soon to be available in the USA, SETA Corporation

decided to put Bio Force Ape on hold to focus on its SNES games. SETA Corporation was shut down in 2008 by its parent company Aruze (now Universal Entertainment Corporation), which is active in the business of pachinko and slot machines. The press release mentions "the deterioration of economic conditions within Japan as caused by the current international financial crisis" as the main cause for this decision. The final games developed by SETA for home consoles were Legend of Golfer (2004) for the Gamecube and Project Sylpheed (2006) for the Xbox 360. Lastly, a fun side note: Bio Force Ape was the subject of much speculation on gaming websites and forums. This led to a famous hoax on the Digital Press forum, where a user named "Paul Brown" posted what appeared to be an original prototype of Bio Force Ape, featuring a "fart" special move capable of corrupting the screen and a blob monster made of butter with weird and questionable dialog. Surprisingly, the same "Paul Brown" (by then revealed to be "Bratwurst," a regular user of the Digital Press forum) reported the Yahoo! Japan auction to Frank Cifaldi, thus contributing to the preservation of the game.

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DINOSAUR LEGEND (KYOURYUU DENSETSU)

Article by: Matt Soulia

Everyone knows and loves Pokémon: It's a game that features the main character capturing little monsters and training them to fight other monsters. Throughout the game, the player grows bonds with these creatures as they eventually become strong enough to evolve and beat tougher opponents. Before Pokémon, however, there is a little known cancelled title named Dinosaur Legend. Also known as Kyouryuu Densetsu, this was a game that was to be developed for the Famicom / NES, by HAL Laboratory (of Kirby and Smash Bros. fame). It was planned to be an RPG wherein the main character travelled the world with a dinosaur by his side and was also said to feature many elements that would later become standards in the Pokémon series, such as monster training and evolution. Other than that, little else is known about this title, while the only real glimpse the world ever got of the game is from a very early (and tiny) screenshot. While HAL may have abandoned Dinosaur Legend, they went on to develop an impressive portfolio of amazing games that to this day, continues to grow. Titles such as cult classic Earthbound, the lovable Kirby games, and of course, the extremely popular Super Smash Bros series are just some of the iconic titles this studio have had a hand in.

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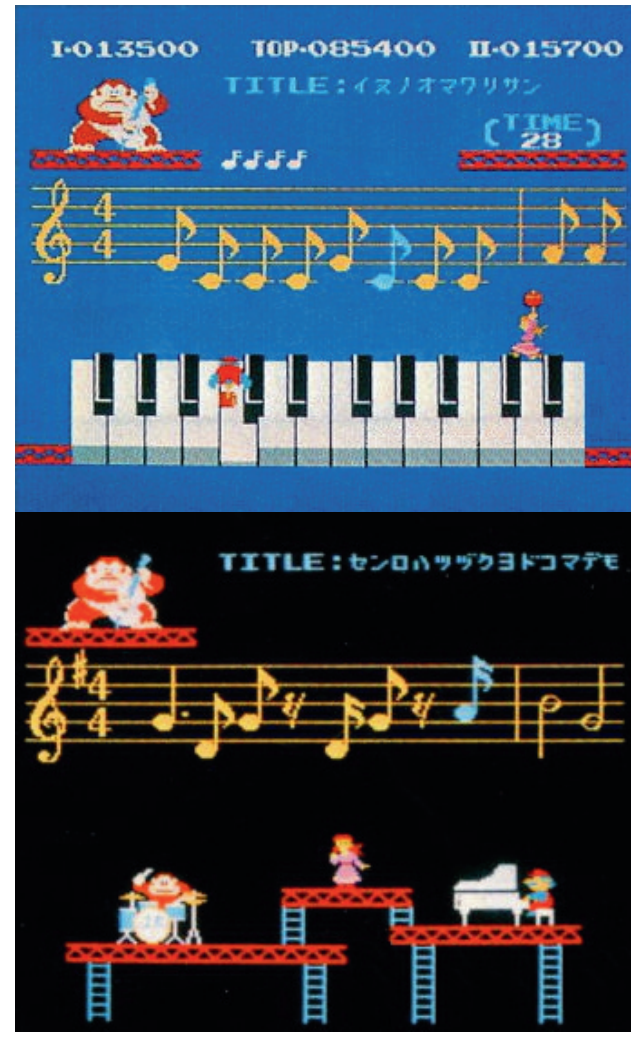
DONKEY KONG'S FUN WITH MUSIC

Article by: Conor Hutton

Donkey Kong's Fun with Music (otherwise known in Japan as Donkey Kong no Ongaku Asobi), is a cancelled NES game from 1983. It was being developed by Nintendo Entertainment Analysis and Development

(Nintendo EAD) who are mainly known for their work on various Mario games but also worked on other popular Nintendo series such as The Legend of Zelda and Star Fox. There's not a whole lot of information on the game, only appearing in a single Japanese magazine from 1983. After that initial appearance, no other information was released, and the game was internally cancelled by Nintendo with no reasons been given to the public. Supposedly part of an educational series of games featuring popular Nintendo characters, Donkey Kong's Fun with Music would have been the successor to Donkey Kong Jr. Math as an educational and entertaining game for children. Starring the cast of the original Donkey Kong games along with Donkey Kong Jr., it would have featured at least two modes called Music Quiz and Donkey Band. Music Quiz involves the titular Donkey Kong playing notes on a bass, while Mario and Pauline had to try and copy by jumping on the keys of a giant piano. In the single player mode, Mario plays the notes while Pauline stands on the sidelines, while in a two-player mode, Player One controlled Mario while Player Two controls Pauline, with both players jumping on notes. Even less is known about the Donkey Band mode, but in a screenshot it looks like a cross between Wii Music and the composer mode in Mario Paint. In this mode, Donkey Kong would have returned as the bassist, Donkey Kong Jr. was on drums, Mario played a white piano and Pauline sang.



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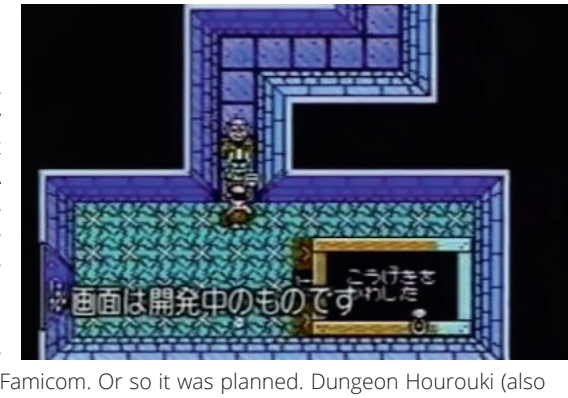
DUNGEON HOUROUKI

Article by: Matt Soulia



In today's gaming world, the sub-genre of games known as Roguelike, games with randomly generating worlds and (in most cases) permanent character deaths, is fairly common on consoles. A simple search of "Roguelike" will result in hundreds of games ranging from triple A projects to indie creations just waiting to be played. Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, this was far from the case. It wasn't until a little known game called Dungeon Hourouki, in development during this time period, that this sub-genre would be brought to the Famicom. Or so it was planned. Dungeon Hourouki (also known as Dungeon Wandering Chronicle) was a game in the Roguelike genre developed by ASCII, a company that developed many games for Sega and Nintendo 8-bit systems in that time. Dungeon Hourouki was, at the

time, also one of the earliest instances of a Roguelike game on a home console. In Dungeon Hourouki, players were tasked with taking control of a group of characters and escaping a dungeon or prison. The map would randomly generate new sections as the player went along in order for each attempt to feel like a new adventure. It would also seem that the player's characters would interact or meet with some NPCs as they went along, as illustrated in some screenshots for the game published in an old Japanese magazine. Unfortunately, outside of those screenshots, little else is known about the game as ASCII shelved it for unknown reasons shortly into development. Since then, ASCII has moved onto other projects, such as publishing computer magazines, and then formed the gaming company Agetec. While the potential of Dungeon Hourouki is unknown, it would have undoubtedly been one of the first console Roguelikes, setting the groundwork for many other games in the sub-genre. Weird fact: as discovered by GDRI, there's a japanese movie, Youjo Densetsu '88, in which Dungeon Hourouki has been somehow integrated into the plot.

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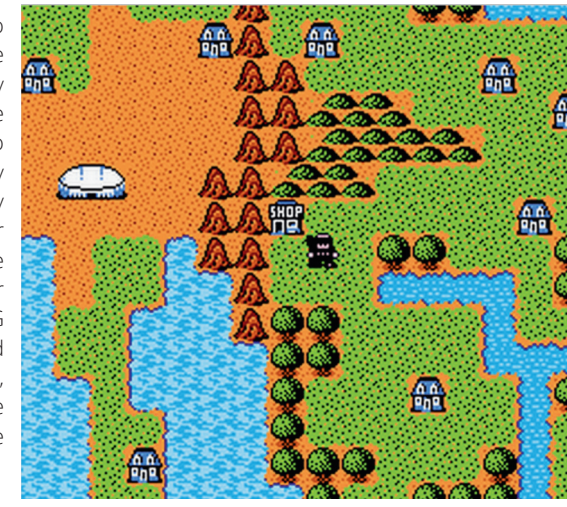
HIT THE ICE

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Hit the Ice is a cancelled arcade hockey title that was in development during 1992 for the NES by Taito, the popular Japanese software house mostly known in the West at that time for Space Invaders and Bubble Bobble. Originally released as a coin-op game in the '90s a port of Hit the Ice was eventually released on Super Nintendo, Sega Mega Drive, Game Boy and PC Engine, but the NES version was never released. Just like the more popular Soccer Brawl, in Hit the Ice players could give a good thrashing to their opponents and perform a ridiculously powerful super-shot. The unreleased NES version also featured an interesting RPG-like “Quest Mode”, in which your primary objective was to find and beat in a hockey match, five opponent teams. Aside from your opponent's home stadiums there was also an overworld in which players could enter houses, explore different areas and get hints and money from NCPs... or if you were unlucky get robbed by an angry landlord. A particularly helpful character, a nameless “old man”, could give you, in exchange of some apples, inner-tubes that were used to cross bodies of water. Apples, together with P. Drinks (an item which powered-up your team in hockey matches) and hamburgers (to increase your experience points), could be bought in shops. Experience and money could also be earned by playing random hockey matches in the overworld, just like random encounters in old Final Fantasy games.

Hit the Ice was essentially completed, it even got a brief review and was featured in the tips section of

Nintendo Power issue 49. However, in the end Taito decided not to release Hit the Ice, probably because the NES was rapidly dying by 1993 and consequently the Japanese publisher thought that it would have sold poorly. Luckily, a ROM of the game leaked onto the internet a few years ago and it can be freely played by retro-gamers, even if it was never officially pubblished. Taito cancelled many other titles in their long history, among which we can mention Space invaders Ex for GameCube, an action game for PlayStation 3 called Project Psychic, the DS RPG Rakugaki Ougoku and a new Puzzle Bubble planned for the Wii, Bust-a-Move Bash!. Taito are still active, recently they released a game called Idol Chronicle for smartphones and published the arcade game School of Ragnarok.



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SCREWBALLS SUPERLEAGUE

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Screwballs Superleague was a brawler / action game planned to be released for the NES. It was being developed at Rare Ltd by a small team led by Simon Hallam, the same programmer that worked on Time Lord. In Screwballs Superleague, players would have to fight to smash their opponents out of arenas in a futuristic, spinning top battle game. The game had two modes of play: battle mode and cooperative play. Players would start each level in their own "spin engine", which would spin-up the character from their normal human state into a spinning top. Players could enter and exit from their spin engine at any point, but it took time to spin the character up to full speed. The faster they were spinning, the more energy they had to throw either another player (in battle mode) or an enemy monster (in coop mode) out of the battle arena. As players bashed into things, and over time, their spin energy would decrease, making them more vulnerable to attack. This forced players to periodically head back into their spin engine to spin-up to full power again. Unfortunately, Screwballs Superleague was cancelled in July of 1990 when Simon left Rare to create his own development studio, Vision Quest. Simon remembered the game as being pretty fun, but it was months away from being completed. At the time Rare did not have a publisher for the game, so they moved resources to other projects (Generally Rare would wait until an original, in-house title was very close to completion before showing it to multiple publishers). During those years at Rare, Simon also designed & co-developed a wireframe 3D viewing system for the NES. As of mid 2016, he's working as Head of Mechatronics at Oculus VR.

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SEIKEN DENSETSU: THE EMERGENCE OF EXCALIBUR

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Seiken Densetsu: The Emergence of Excalibur was an action RPG developed by Squaresoft, that was supposed to launch in April of 1987 for the Famicom Disk System, a rewritable disc drive for the Famicom that never made it outside of Japan. Initially planned to consist of five discs, according to ex-Squaresoft employee Kaoru Moriyama, the project didn't go very far: "A five volume saga was too big of a plan, and it was never supported among the top management. So it got cancelled in the beginning of development." Interestingly, in October 1987 Square sent to those who had already reserved Seiken Densetsu a letter of apology, advising that the game was cancelled and that they could get a refund or alternatively, they suggested that consumers could use the money to preorder a copy of their new title that was due to be released in December of that year: Final Fantasy. Thanks to a Japanese wiki and a couple of scans, we have at least some information about The Emergence of Excalibur's story and main characters. The plot revolved around the quest of an unnamed young boy trying to find the legendary sword Excalibur, which was the only weapon that could defeat Vargas, the evil demon lord of the Bardos Isle. Apart from the main character, the player could freely choose three remaining NPCs for their party, from a roster of eight characters: Atlas of Lancelot, a tall warrior with a cowardly personality that drinks sake, Rune of Lancelot; a short but fast shy boy, Gate of Wordsworth; a wandering traveller that fights for his reputation and hates orders, Alphon of Bardos Isle; a brave yet uncooperative boy that uses a staff and whose main speciality is magic, and Fred of Bardos Isle; a woodsman, full of hate against the monsters because they killed his parents. Unfortunately, no information is available regarding the last three characters - Iris, Patrice and Perseus. Every member of the party had its own behaviours, for example: Cowardly and shy characters could sometimes flee from enemies, instead of attacking them. Other NPCs included a young sorcerer that sold weapons, armors and items within dungeons, a mysterious figure nicknamed "Hinomaru-man". This odd character was dressed like an American superhero and would appear when the player was in trouble, to take damage instead of the protagonist. According to a Japanese website, the first chapter of the series was set in the Isle of Bardos and in its underground dungeons, some of which had up to five floors. Despite this game being cancelled, the Seiken Densetsu title was eventually reused for a completely unrelated Action RPG, originally named Gemma Knights. This new game was eventually released for Game Boy in 1991 (and in the West, as Final Fantasy Adventure), becoming the first chapter in the popular Seiken Densetsu/Mana series.

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SEISHO 1999

Article by: Matt Soulia

When a game is cancelled, it can be for many reasons. Sometimes this is due to time constraints. Some other times, it could be because a project was perceived that it would not sell well. In a few cases, sometimes developers just lose interest in a project. Then, some games are cancelled, with little to no information as to why, or what the game was even going to be - Such is the case with a little game called Seisho 1999. A game that was to be developed by Imagineer / Wavejack for the Famicom / NES, Seisho 1999 (also known as Bible 1999) was apparently going to be a game that drew heavy inspiration from the First of the North Star anime, featuring powerful fighters and set in a post-apocalyptic world. Relatively early into its development, Seisho 1999 was cancelled for unknown reasons, and no more information was ever released, besides a few screenshots and concept art that appeared on an old Japanese magazine. Since that game's cancellation, Imagineer has gone on to publish and develop many other titles, such as several console ports of PC favourite Sim City, the Nintendo 64's Quest 64, plus several licensed titles based on anime. It's a shame that nothing more is known about this game, but it just goes to show how fast-paced and unpredictable game development can be.

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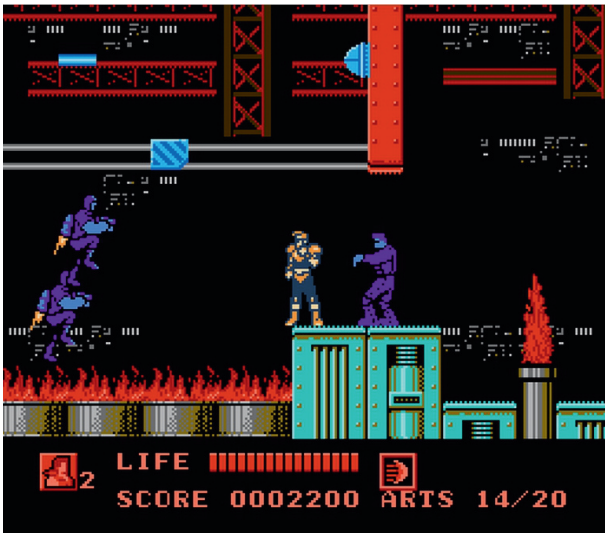
TIME DIVER: EON MAN

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Time Diver: Eon Man is a cancelled action-game developed at A.I, an obscure Japanese software house known mostly for their work on the PC Genjin (Bonk) series, and recently for the 3DS title Super Robot Wars UX. The publisher was going to be Taito and the American launch date was set for 1993. The game started as a sequel for Wrath of the Black Mantra, but it was quickly retooled at Taito's request and became a completely new title. Time Diver's plot was summarized in Nintendo Power issue 45: sixty years into the future, the world is crime-free due to the "clear system" designed by Kane Nelson. Unfortunately, a secret organization called Romedrux tries to prevent the "clear system" from ever being invented by killing Kane or his ancestors. In Los Angeles during 1993 Dan Nelson, an ordinary student, finds himself under attack by Romedrux warriors and learns about his future son Kane after being saved by a mysterious man. He then starts time traveling, thanks to another Kane's invention, in order to protect his ancestors and descendants. The gameplay of Time Diver was much simpler than its over-complicated story, being a cross between a beat'em up, since your main attacks were a punch and a flying kick, and a platformer for the emphasis on wall-jumping. After finishing one of the five stages (Peaceful 1993, Wild West 1882, Devastated 2052, Devastated 1993 and Peaceful Utopia version of 2052), the order of which was randomized except for the first stage, players acquired a new special power, for example a weapon that could stop time or an "earthquake" that killed all the enemies on screen. Time Diver: Eon Man was essentially complete, it even got a brief review and was featured in the tips section of Nintendo Power issue 45. However, in the end Taito decided not to release it, probably because NES was rapidly dying in 1993 and the Japanese publisher thought that such a generic title would have sold poorly. Nonetheless, one year later, a game named Time Diver: Avenger was released in the Asian market. Basically, a software house called Nitra had changed the title screen and the copyright date, as well as replacing Taito's logo with their own, leaving everything else untouched. It is currently unknown who Nitra was, but an article on Lostlevels speculated that they could have been a company who bought the rights to the game or even an old branch of Taito. In any case, Time Diver: Eon Man's original ROM was leaked by Frank Cifaldi in 2007 and it is freely available on the internet.



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Sega Master System

Article by: Damiano Bacci (Blek)

The Sega Master System (SMS) represents the first real attempt by Sega to earn a spot in the video game market worldwide. Not many people know that the SMS was basically a redesign of a previous console by Sega, the Sega Mark III, originally released only in Japan in 1985, which was the direct successor of Sega's first home console, the SG-1000. The SG-1000 was released in 1983 and it was a commercial failure, incapable of competing with the huge success of Nintendo's 8-bit Famicom and its library of games. The Sega Mark III was designed to be more powerful than the Famicom, but it also failed to attract consumers and steer the market away from Nintendo, particularly because Sega was unable to get enough 3rd party titles on their console. Following Nintendo's decision to rebrand the Famicom as the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in the West, Sega chose the name "Master System" for the western market, hoping to gain some ground in the ferocious competition of the 8-bit generation. The SMS was released in USA in 1986, advertising a gaming experience comparable to arcade games, with titles like Hang-On. However, the console was again poorly received by the North American public. On the contrary, Europe represented the biggest market for the Master System, especially its redesign, the Master System II, bulkier, less futuristic and not backwards compatible with the SG-1000's Sega Cards. As an example, Sega ceased to publish games for the SMS very early, in Japan in 1989, in USA in 1991, whereas in the Europe support for the console continued through the first part of the 90s. The SMS sold nearly 7 million consoles in Europe. The SMS ended up being hugely popular in Brazil, where it's still one of the best selling consoles to date. Two crazy facts: Tectoy (the Brazilian toy company which had a selling agreement with Sega) released a port of Street Fighter II for the SMS in 1997, and in 2015 a website reported that Tectoy still sell nearly 150.000 Master System units per year. The SMS shared the same hardware of Sega's Game Gear handled, which helped porting titles between the two platforms. The library includes classic games like Alex Kidd in Miracle World (1986), Wonder Boy (1986), Phantasy Star I & II (1987, 1989), Double Dragon (1988), Fantasy Zone (1986), Space Harrier (1986), Outrun (1987), Afterburner (1987), Rescue Mission (1988), Sonic the Hedgehog (1991), Ninja Gaiden (1992), Sonic Chaos (1993) and less known yet interesting titles as Kung Fu Kid (1987), Penguin Land (1987), Spellcaster (1988), Lord of the Sword (1988), Golvellius (1988), Psycho Fox (1989), Master of Darkness (1992) and Buggy Run (1993). Besides its superior power the SMS was not capable of outselling the NES worldwide, but it laid the foundations for the success of the Mega Drive / Genesis, launching Sega as one of the top world manufacturers of video game consoles until their retirement as a software-only company. The Sega Master System has its own list of unreleased games, but it seems even more difficult than usual to gather enough info to write something interesting about them. Many of these canceled SMS titles were just ports of games released on other consoles or PC and tie-in for popular movies and cartoons. For most canned projects that would be original exclusives for the system, we only have a title and nothing more. As it happens with the NES and other old consoles from the mid / late '80s, the most common way to find some details or screenshots for these unpublished games is to search through gaming magazines of the time and unfortunately not much was found in those. Even with so little to write about we still wanted to add in this book a short chapter dedicated to the Sega Master System, not only because it's still one of the major 8-bit consoles from our childhood, but also because this struggle to preserve info and media for its canceled titles shows how easily games once in development can be lost and forgotten forever. In the following page we'll take a look at a strange Sonic spin-off that somehow was developed for the Sega Master System, but never officially released.

SONIC'S EDUSOFT

Article by: Damiano Bacci

Sonic's Edusoft is a cancelled game, developed by Tiertex, that was originally going to be released on the Sega Master System by U.S. Gold. Pretty much everyone was unaware of its existence until a programmer of the game created a page on Wikipedia in September 2006, sharing a screenshot and various details. The page went into numerous changes and removals, before finally being taken down in May 2008 for lack of notability. This Sonic prototype was meant to be an educational game aimed at 5 year-old children, consisting of spelling puzzles, maths and, occasionally, other mini games. Players were able to roam around a map where they could enter all the different stages, which awarded stars after Sonic had answered all the questions within the the time limit to prevent his opponent from winning. Overall, the gameplay is very simple and straightforward, the programmer reported that the game was tested in a primary school in Didsbury, Manchester and it was quite well received. The Sonic community was buzzed by this discovery but many people thought about a hoax or some sort of hack. Many questions were answered when someone nicknamed "the programmer" replied to a topic on the SMS Power Forum, explaining that Sonic Edusoft was an experiment made by Tiertex Limited, a UK videogame developer and publisher based in Manchester which, at the time, was active in converting a number of games for the Sega Master System under giant British publisher U.S. Gold. From what we learned through various magazine articles, Sega granted the Sonic licence to U.S. Gold to convert it for various computer formats and given the strong bond between Tiertex and U.S. Gold, Sonic Edusoft came to live. The programmer (now identified as Jez Sherlock) explained the development process in the same topic on SMS Power's Forum: "I say it is of no interest but of course it does have its place in the history of Sonic. Is it an unofficial or unlicensed game? It's hard to say. It's not a fan game definitely but it was officially allowed to be developed just not approved for publishing. The usage of Sonic was never licensed, not that it may have needed to be if Sega published it. As far as being a licensed Master System game goes...if it wasn't approved, it was never a licensed ROM. You could say it was the first unofficially, unlicensed game. [...] In fact, Sega were shown the product, tracked its progress and as I understand it were okay with what was going on. [...] we were either 'approved' or 'allowed' (and I'm not sure which word would be best there) we just never came to a point of the project being given the greenlight for publishing and having that 'licensed by Sega' type message on the front. But as explained, it not being licensed doesn't mean what people might think - it was about as official as it can get for the stage it was taken too. Obviously this was no ordinary project though, given we were toying with Sonic. Really, the permission to do this was no doubt due to the influence of US Gold and the founder there Geoff Brown. If anything this project was his idea and his baby and he was the one who convinced Sega to let him do this with a developer." This means that Sonic's Edusoft was probably the first Sonic game developed outside Sonic Team, and it came before the Master System version of Sonic 1, because the developers probably didn't know about its port. The game itself is in a rather complete stage, although it features different bugs in various levels. We cannot be sure why this game went unreleased. Perhaps Sega didn't like the outcome of the game or it didn't feel right about licensing its most notable franchise to third party developers. Sonic would be later used in other kid's platforms (most notably the Sega Pico). The Sonic Edusoft ROM is now available online so you can download and try it for yourself. Tiertex is now known as Tiertex Design Studios, and they are focused on electronic design, prototyping and small scale production of microcontrollers. The last games they developed were a few Game Boy Advance titles: Carrera Power Slide (2003), Lego Football Mania (2002) and a bunch of Java games for cellphones.

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PC Engine (TurboGrafx-16)

Article by: Tony Peters

The PC Engine, better known among some circles by its American name, the TurboGrafx-16, was a Japanese-developed video game console originally released in Japan on October 1987. Co-developed by radio-telecommunications-seller-turned-video-game-developer Hudson Soft, Nippon Electric Company (a multinational IT corporation known as NEC) released the console and wowed gamers upon release in its homeland. Yet outside of that small window of time, the waters of fate were murky and treacherous. Hudson was in the business of several video game and computer-related fields, but hardware publishing was not among them. So, they shopped their design around to Japanese companies with the necessary hardware capabilities - including Nintendo - before coming to terms with NEC. The PC Engine entered the market as the first torch-bearer of the 16-bit era, touting a dual 16-bit GPU (though still relying on an 8-bit CPU). The system set a new bar in graphics and audio for home video game consoles, bringing a personal computer mindset to the marketplace. Within 18 months, the PC Engine sold several million units, eventually adding up to a total of 8 million total units sold in Japan. Though unable to secure enough market share to overtake Nintendo as the primary Japanese console-maker, Hudson surged past Sega's Master System as Nintendo's primary challenger and even outsold the Famicom in their second year on the market. A large part of such success was the aggressive marketing strategy tailored for Japan's uniquely dispersed population and a strong library of initial titles that displayed what the PC Engine could do that the Famicom could not. Namely, Irem's side-scrolling arcade shooter R-Type, released in two parts 5 and 7 months after the console's debut. With the Famicom lacking the power to handle a comparable port, this became one of the console's first bonafide hits. Titles such as the Japanese-celebrity-starring Kato-Chan Ken-Chan (JJ & Jeff, 1987), Ultraman parody Wonder Momo (1987), train board game Momotaro Dentetsu (1989), and based on Japanese folklore role playing game Momotaro Densetsu Turbo (1990), all catered directly to Japanese palates, proving vital to the system's continued success. The PC Engine reached its peak in Japan when it became the first console to feature a CD-ROM in 1989 with the add-on CD-ROM. One of Japan's most beloved gaming series, Hudson's own Tengai Makyo (1989), was birthed during this period, showcasing many of the system's unique features while proving the market viability of the CD-ROM blockbuster role-playing game. Unfortunately, all the success and gains the PC Engine made in Japan were nowhere to be found under the guise of Turbografx. This issue was greatly exasperated by the console's almost complete failure in the United States, where it was doomed for failure almost immediately. Somewhere along the line, Hudson made the decision to go all in and spend a disproportionate amount of the Turbografx's initial budget on console manufacturing. When the company found itself unable to move the systems as quickly as planned, the NEC found itself overstocked and unable to fund the advertising war between consoles. With the bungled American release proving a distraction, the system never saw much in the way of European release. Though it was briefly released in France under the PC Engine name shortly after its American launch, it failed to become popular. Telegames attempted a soft launch in the UK, dropping the "16" part of the Turbografx name, but it hastily ended with an extremely limited supply of consoles actually seeing release. The system only found a foothold in the import market through an unlicensed importer, Sodipeng. Despite a strong start, NEC and Hudson were unable to hold onto their status as the number two video game console-maker for very long. Despite being the first to utilize CD-ROM technology for console gaming, they fell prey to the same hyperactivity that plagued Sega at the same time. NEC and Hudson made multiple attempts to upgrade and extend the life of the PC Engine, but instead of the system being seen as a flexible system with upgrade potential, the entire process confused developers and gamers alike, who ignored the system in response. By the time the successor to the PC Engine, the PC-FX, hit the market, gamers had moved on from the unfulfilled promises and the console died a quiet death. Hudson no longer exists in the industry. Though active as recently as 2011 in their hardware department, fellow Japanese developer Konami staged a buyout of the company. However, with Konami facing its own internal issues, Hudson's legacy as both a console maker and game developer is actively collecting dust. NEC continues to be a force in IT technology and electronics, but hasn't set foot back into the console business since the PC Engine. Thankfully, the internet has not only allowed existing PC Engine / Turbografx fans the ability to find, collect and play the games of their past, it has been even more instrumental in reviving interest in the console and its library, as well as helping it find new eyes. Many of the PC Engine's games have either never been released outside of Japan and/or their original releases, unintentionally creating a sense of mystery and mysticism around the titles. With such a Japan-focused console the most interesting cancelled projects planned for PC Engine were in development by those few Japanese studios already mentioned, with lost sequels and spin-off for popular Genjiin and Tengai Makyou series. There are probably many more obscure and weird games never released for PC Engine, but as it happens with other japanese consoles from the ‘80s and ‘90s, most details are hidden away in forgotten japanese magazines we’ll never see.

PC COCORON

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

PC Cocoron is a platformer that was going to be released for the PC Engine's Super CD System. According to the Game Developer Research Institute, publisher Sur Dé Wave allegedly outsourced the development of the game to a different, and currently unknown, company. It was likely to be a remake of a NES title named "Cocoron" (developed by Takeru, a Japanese software house which owned publishing label Sur Dé Wave), and it was originally slated for launch in September 1993. Unfortunately, PC Cocoron was first delayed to February 1994 and then cancelled altogether in the same year, probably due to Sur Dé Wave going bankrupt. While the plot of PC Cocoron was typical for a side-scroller at the time (A wizard of the Dream World sends a hero to rescue Princess Rua, who has been kidnapped by an evil witch), the game was unique in letting the player to create their own character using various body parts for the head, body and arms - Each one offering useful effects. The available head types were: Ninja, Hero, Robot, Slime, Knight, Marine, Bird and Cyborg. For the body types: Armor (Block bullets by using a shield), Wing (Fly for a brief period), Spike (Hurt enemies by touching them), Slime (No slipping on ice and slopes), Jet (Fly for a longer period), Marine (Good for swimming), Robot (No spike damage) and Knight (Balanced, no special ability). Lastly, the arm types with their related attacks were: Soap (Slips forward when touching the ground or an obstacle), Pencil (Rapid fire), Ball (Bounces everywhere), Shurikens (Shot in three directions), Boomerang (Shots and come back), Crystal (Breaks when touching a wall, causing damage to enemies), Parasol (Flies around when opened, and can go through walls), and Paper Plane (Flies in a wave-like pattern). Every weapon had also a different attack power. Arm parts could be upgraded by collecting weapon power-ups sometimes left by enemies; for example, a fully powered-up arm could shoot in three directions and not just from the front. Moreover, seeing that a head or a body part with many hit-points was also very heavy (and vice versa), players had to create a balanced character that wasn't too weak or so heavy that they could hardly jump and move. Compared to the original NES version, some head, body and arm parts were removed, and a few new ones were added. Other power-ups could also be sometimes collected from defeated enemies, such those that heal the player, offer an extra life, or even invincibility. At the start of the game there would have been only 5 stages unlocked in the world map: Spirit Forest, Milk Sea, Fire Mountain, Ice Mountain and Castle. These levels could be played in any order, with the layout of the stage and the type of the enemies changing according to the route selected (basically meaning that every stage had five variants). After beating a level, the player could assemble a completely new character, or make changes to the current one. Finishing all the five levels unlocked the evil witch's location; while defeating her gave access to the real final stage, where the player had to battle the wizard of the Dream World. Compared to the original NES version, the Star Hill level was removed and the Ice-Fire mountain stage ended up being split in two. Apparently, a nearly complete build of PC Cocoron is owned by a Japanese collector. In 1994, Sur Dé Wave also cancelled Pop'n Land for Sega Cd, another title which allowed the player to create and customise the

main character. One of Takeru's most famous titles is an interesting NES platformer called Lickle: Legend of the Holy Bell, which was released in the West as Little Samson.

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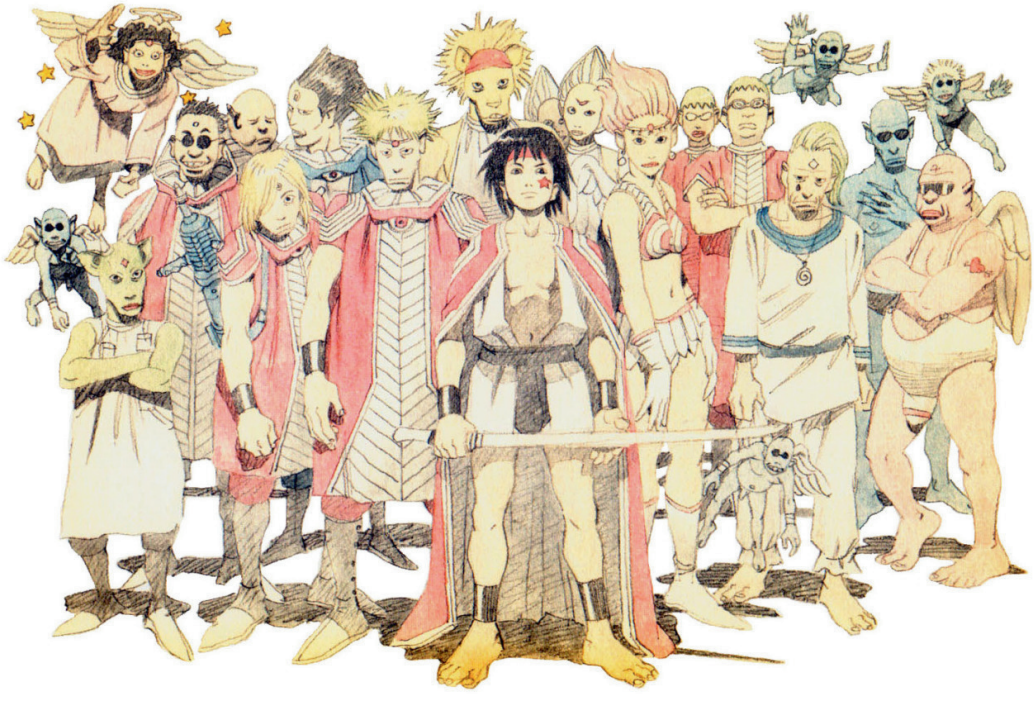
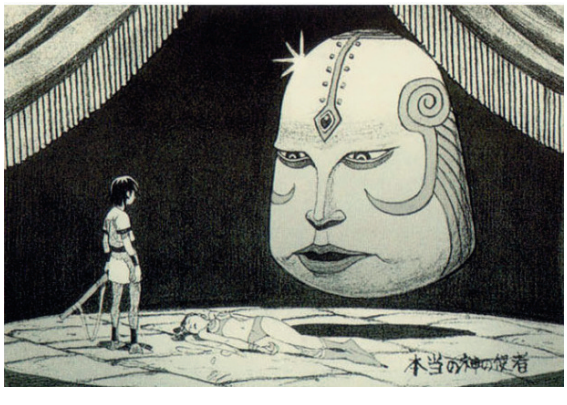
TENGAI MAKYOU III: NAMIDA

Article by: Tony Peters

Tengai Makyou III: Namida is a cancelled RPG from the Far East of Eden (Tengai Makyou) series, originally planned for the PC-FX. First announced in 1995 as a PC Engine Super CD game, it was moved to the Arcade Card format before ending its NEC life as a piece of PC-FX vaporware. Before finally showing up on Japanese Playstation 2 consoles in 2005, Namida made a stop on the PSX before being quietly canceled, though little to no information on this stop seems to exist. The Far East of Eden series was a surprise success for developer Red Company (now known as Red Entertainment Corporation). The first title in the series, described by one fan as "the Final Fantasy VII of 1989," broke ground as the first role-playing game released on a CD-ROM, which allowed the game to utilize full motion-video anime sequences, voice acting and CD-quality music. Work began on the original Namida, a sequel to the 1992 PC Engine Super CD title Tengai Makyou II: Manji Maru (originally subtitled, Swastika Maru), in the mid-1990s. The scenario for the game was announced as completed around June 1995. Yet, during this time, information shared or leaked about the game amounted to a few pieces of promotional artwork and a short animation of the main character. A common thread between previews of the game in Japanese gaming magazines (such as Dengeki) was simply a common frame of, "when will this game be released?" The gaming landscape quickly changed in the mid 1990s, thanks to Sony's entrance into consoles with the Playstation spreading gaming dollars in Japan even thinner, and NEC found themselves on the outside looking in. Unable to meet very modest sales predictions of 100,000 units sold within the console's first year of release (compared to the million plus Playstations moved during the same time), the handlers of the PC-FX were quickly thrust into panic mode, from which they never recovered. As a result, the NEC began putting PC-FX development into a holding pattern based on a game or accessory's profit potential. Unfortunately for all of those involved, that potential was inching ever closer to none at all. Using dependency on market performance as a driving factor, the expansive - and expensive - development on Namida was brought to an end in 1997. How much of the game's development was completed prior to its end as a PC-FX title continues to be relatively unknown. Development was moved to the PSX, presumably during or after development of the fourth game in the series, Tengai Makyou IV: Fourth of the Apocalypse, for the Sega

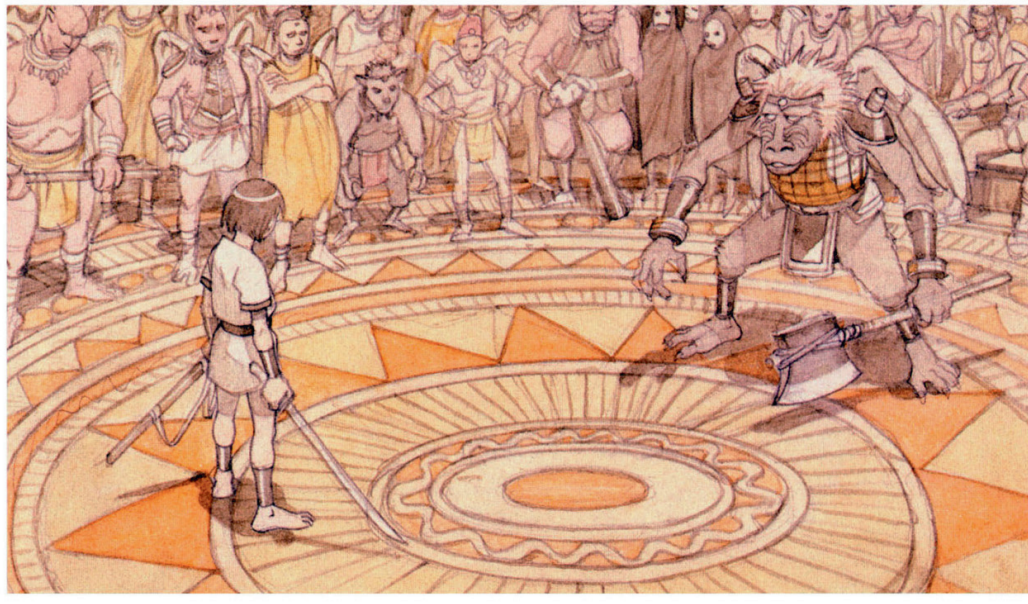


Saturn in 1997, but information on that move is more rare than information on the original versions. Japanese PC-FX fans of the series, many of whom invested in the PC-FX solely for Namida's release (considered a system-selling series at the time), were furious at the news of the cancellation. They started a write-in petition to the publisher in hopes of the move being reconsidered, but were met with the same reasoning NEC used to kill the project: the potential sales of any PC-FX games were simply too low to break even, let alone turn a profit. As ownership of the series belonged to then publisher Hudson Soft, the developers were forced to abandon the project. In 2003, after remaking Manji Maru for the Playstation 2 and Gamecube, developer Red Entertainment decided to take another crack at Namida. This version, released only for the Playstation 2 in Japan in 2005, features a wildly different scenario and characters and leaves out nearly all connections to the PC-FX version. Even a making-of-the-game DVD included with the Special Edition release of Namida lacked any information on Namida's development history prior to the move to Playstation 2. Likewise, the official developer diaries for the Playstation 2 game lacked any mention of the deep history behind one of Japan's most beloved lost games. Fans were pleasantly surprised to find that in 2007, former RED Entertainment employee and Far East of Eden game designer Shoji Masuda released the first of two novels based on the scenario he wrote for the PC-FX Namida. These books, titled Haruka, allowed long-languishing fans of the original Namida and the series as a whole to experience some of what was planned for the lost game. That, combined with information shared in Masuda's book, Design brain - Masuda Shoji Ideas and Tricks, and old information culled from coverage by Japanese magazine, PC Engine Fan, allowed fans to put together a partial cast list:



- Tears, also known as Minami Wataru,a young male, lead character
- Mayu, a young girl who seems integral to the story
- Himiko, a young woman, dressed in royal garb
- Setsuna, a tall man with a cape, helmet and uniform that appear to match Himiko
- Unknown dog, a medium-sized white dog with a brown patch over its left eye

While developer Red Entertainment does still exist in the video game landscape, publishing partners Hudson Soft and NEC do not. Victor Ireland, currently of Gajinworks and formerly of Working Designs, has been one of the loudest notable supporters of any of the Far East of Eden role-playing games seeing a release outside of Japan (especially his favorite, IV). His failed attempt to bring the Xbox 360 remake



of the first game in the series, Far East of Eden Ziria, to Western audiences may have been the closest chance yet. Looking forward into 2016, there appears to be little hope of seeing what came of the PC-FX version of Namida without direct assistance from someone who worked on the project. Nearly no new information, screenshots or other media have surfaced; only secondary accounts and hearsay exist today. And so, the story of one of the most anticipated games in the PC-FX's history continues to remain elusive.

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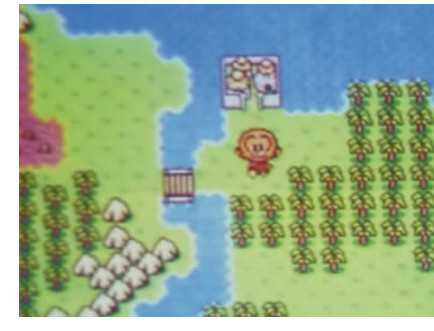
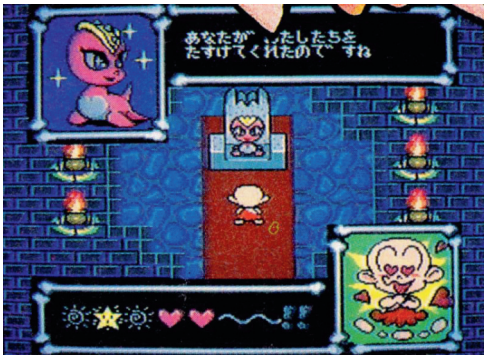
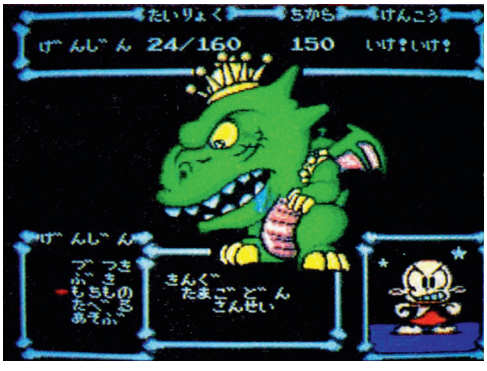
RPC GENJIN

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



RPC Genjin (aka Bonk RPG) is a JRPG that was in development for PC Engine in 1992 at Hudson Soft - The Japanese software house behind titles such as Bomberman and Adventure Island. It's fun to note how the title was a pun that mixed together RPG and the Bonk series' original Japanese name of PC Genjin (itself a pun, as Genjin means "primitive man" and also sounds a lot like "PC Engine"). As a spin-off of the popular (at the time) Bonk prehistoric-themed series of platformers, the game was first announced in the last page of the instruction manual for PC Denjin (Air Zoid in U.S.A.), and then previewed in a few Japanese and Western magazines. According to Electronic Gaming Monthly (EGM) 35, the game was slated for release in the last quarter of 1992.





Unfortunately, it seems that RPC Genjin was cancelled very early; PC Engine Fan Magazine wrote that the game was 40% complete in March 1992, but that was probably incorrect. In June 1992, EGM reported a much lower but, perhaps, more accurate completion percentage of 20%. In an interview with the Game Developer Research Institute, Shouichi Yoshikawa, one of the key people behind Bonk 3, shed more light on the existence of this game: "Ahahaha, RPG Genjin, you say? I was there for that. A sample ROM had come from Hudson that I played, but... No, I think the correct answer is that it never existed", suggesting a low-quality project that was quickly shelved. Regarding the plot: King Tamagodon III, the main villain of the series, monopolized all the food of the world and Bonk had to stop him. Initially, players controlled a blue dinosaur whose mission was to find our hero, that would later became the main character. Some of the classic enemies of the past Bonk games, such as Henry Hatchet and Egghead Errol, V.L. Chure, were also supposed to make a return. Like in other JRPGs of the time, RPC Genjin featured an overworld map, towns, shops and a turn-based battle system. The combat menu commands somewhat replicated the abilities that Bonk had in his platform games; for example, he could do a headbutt, use a weapon, eat and so on. After shelving RPC Genjin, Hudson Soft went to release three more Bonk games: PC Genjin 3 (PC Engine, 1993), Cho Genjin (SNES, 1994), Cho Genjin 2 (SNES, 1995). In 1995 Hudson started development of Ultra Genjin for Nintendo 64, but the project was dropped after a few months and the basic concept of the game was eventually reused to make Bomberman Hero. In 2011, after ten years of being a majority shareholder, Konami absorbed Hudson Soft into a wholly owned subsidiary, before cancelling all of their remaining projects, including PC Genjin for 3DS and Bonk: Brink of Destruction for PSN / Xbox Live Arcade.

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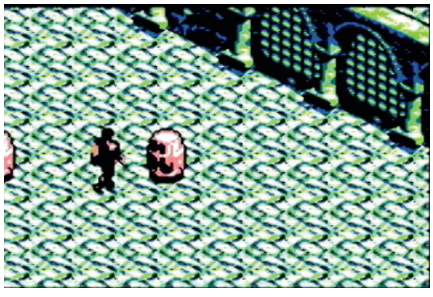
Game Boy

Article by: Tristan Avery, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

In 1979 Gunpei Yokoi noticed a bored businessman playing around with his pocket calculator on the train and began formulating the idea for what would become Ball, the first game in the popular Game and Watch series and the first handheld video game released by Nintendo. While the Game and Watch wouldn't be the first handheld video game ever released it certainly stood out in among prior unsuccessful attempts by other toy companies such as Mattel and Milton Bradley, and can arguably be credited with creating what handheld gaming is today. The Game and Watch series would go on to find great success, yet the simple act of observing a man playing with his calculator would continue to inspire Yokoi to create the most successful video game system of all time: the GameBoy. There's not too much to say about the second most successful handheld of all time other than, well, that. Conceived by Gunpei Yokoi and Nintendo Research & Development, the first version of the GameBoy was released worldwide in 1989 as an evolution of the Game & Watch series. The Game Boy was created with two major focuses: low cost and power efficiency. Yokoi understood that such kind of portable console had to be both cheap and sparing on energy usage to be played for extended periods of time. Game Boy's black and green liquid crystal display (LCD) screen was not the latest technology at the time (far from it in fact) but that's why Nintendo were able to mass produce their handheld at a low cost while conserving battery power. Other companies tried to release more powerful handheld systems, such as the Atari Lynx and the Sega Game Gear, but their full color screens consumed batteries in just a few hours and their larger designs were not comfortable or portable. Also, competitors did not have Tetris or other popular Nintendo games; in just a couple of years, the Game Boy spawned many cult titles developed by first and third parties, such as Super Mario Land (1989), The Final Fantasy Legend (1989), Alleyway (1989), DuckTales (1990), Bugs Bunny Crazy Castle (1990), Dr. Mario (1990), Gargoyle's Quest (1990), Faceball 2000 (1991), Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge (1991) and Game Boy Wars (1991). Even before the release of the iconic and revolutionary Pokémon Red and Blue (1996), gamers could enjoy a multitude of great products only available on the Game Boy. Thanks to an ingenious marketing campaign and a variety of games targeted to different audiences, the Game Boy became a hit for kids and adults of all ages. While the Game Boy was already a worldwide success, the Pokèmon trend gave new energy to the console and money to Nintendo, who was happy to continue to produce games for an aging device. Sequels and new titles were developed, such as Tetris Attack (1996), Fushigi no Dungeon: Furai no Shiren GB (1996), Chalvo 55 (1997, related to the cancelled Virtual Boy game "Bound High"), Tamagotchi (1997), Legend of the River King GB (1997) and Game Boy Wars Turbo (1997). In 1998 Nintendo finally released the Game Boy Color, an evolution of the handled with a color screen.The Game Boy Color had slightly better hardware along with the color screen, giving developers the ability to create larger and more complex projects. Some of these projects would be original games but most were ports of popular titles planned or already available for other systems: Bomberman Quest (1998), Conker's Pocket Tales (1999, with the cute Conker instead of the adult version), Mario Golf (1999), Pokémon Gold and Silver (1999), Survival Kids (1999), Daikatana (2000), Crystalis (2000), Samurai Kid (2000), Dragon Warrior I & II (2000), Metal Gear: Ghost Babel (2000), Perfect Dark (2000), Warlocked (2000), Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare (2001), Dragon's Lair (2001), The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages / Seasons (2001), Lufia: The Legend Returns (2001) and Shantae (2002). Together with its predecessor, the Game Boy line sold almost 120 millions units worldwide. Pretty successful, isn't it? It's easy to understand why developers created so many titles for the Game Boy line, with more than 1.500 games published during its lifetime. Then in 2003 the hardware was officially discontinued in favor of its successor, the Game Boy Advance, released in 2001. As it happens with the most popular consoles, a high number of games developed also means an high number of cancelled projects. All gaming studios wanted a piece of the Game Boy market, but not all of them were successful at releasing what they planned. In the following pages we'll see a series of ambitious Game Boy projects, that for different reasons, never saw the light of day.

GAME BOY

DIABLO



Article by: Andrew Borman

Discovered on a prototype cart by PtoPOnline.com in 2007, Diablo on the Gameboy was a tech demo developed by Blizzard as one of their attempts to port the series to a Nintendo handheld. The demo ran on standard Gameboy hardware, not the later Gameboy color, and featured an animated title screen of the Diablo logo. Gameplay in the demo itself was very simple. Players could control a character and walk around an isometric dungeon map, although no collision had been implemented, meaning the player could simply walk through the walls. While there are treasure chests in the world itself, they are non-interactive. The only other ability in the demo is the ability to swing a sword, although with no enemies it has no actual use. Digging into the prototype binary itself, an English font is available, despite no text appearing in the demo anywhere. Some other graphic titles exist as well, although no one has activated them in the game. At least three prototype carts of the game exist, according to insiders who worked on the tech demo, although their current whereabouts are unknown. According to David Craddock in an article on Shacknews, Blizzard was working on a title called Diablo Junior, which was to take a page out of Pokemon's book in the creation of three different versions of the game, each with a different hero. This single-player only version of the game, which may be unrelated to the previously mentioned tech demo, was being developed for an undecided platform, either the Gameboy Color or Gameboy Advance, indicating that if any code was written, it was quite early. Without knowing exactly who worked on this tech demo, it is unclear how large of an effort Diablo on the Gameboy was for Blizzard. Their next title on a Nintendo platform was then StarCraft 64, developed with the help of Mass Media and released for Nintendo 64 in 2000.

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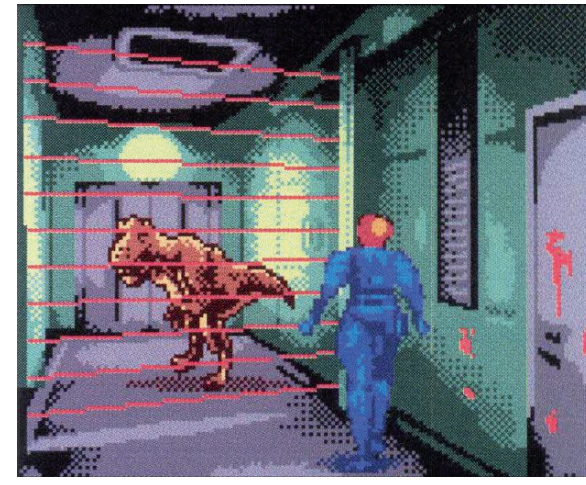
DINO CRISIS

Article by: Sam Batten

The original Dino Crisis was a widely popular survival horror (marketed as survival panic) game developed by Capcom and released on the original PlayStation in 1999. It was created by the same team that made the first Resident Evil game and contained many of the same tense elements but focused on more of an action feel. A portable version of Dino Crisis was being developed for the Gameboy Color by British studio M4 Ltd, who had previously released Tasmanian Devil: Munching Madness and were due to release Jerry McGrath Supercross 2000 for the same portable console. M4 stated that the game would have had a top-down view and not be complete until Q4 of 2000, but development had started early in the year. In the end this version of Dino Crisis was never

released, but M4 later developed top-down Resident Evil Gaiden, published by Capcom in 2001 for GameBoy Color. In an old interview with NowGamer the developers confirmed that this unreleased version of Dino Crisis was used as a base to develop the released Resident Evil Gaiden: "As I recall, we produced a very impressive demo for a GBC version of Dino Crisis. Resident Evil was already in development as an over-ambitious port from the PlayStation version. This was scrapped and Capcom asked us to do a bespoke game with our Dino Crisis engine. [...] Capcom had requested Virgin for a Dino Crisis demo, Virgin asked us to create it. It used the exploration mode and [similar] battle system as Gaiden would use. [...] It was playable. The dino sprites in exploration mode were large. I have entire backups of everything from M4, absolutely everything, but I'm in Brazil and the backups are in the UK." This is not the only version of a GBC Dino Crisis that was in development, as on two separate Spanish websites Vandal and Dino Crisis Wiki the game was reported to be being developed by a different studio. This other canceled game was said to be being developed by the now missing Fluid Studios another British developer who released games such as Top Gun: Firestorm (GB) and Army Men: Air Combat (GB and N64). This was also said to be being developed late 1999 early 2000, for the GBC. There are a few more details for this version of the game though: it would not be a top down adventure like M4's demo, but rather using static backgrounds and images accompanied by text sequences, like the lost re-make of Resident Evil GBC. Some presumed screenshots from Fluid Studios' Dino Crisis seem to have been leaked online too, but we don't know their source. These sites also report that the game was to have 7 maps with 100 rooms in total. There were to be four characters in the game Regina, Rick, Gail and Dr Kirk all who appeared in the original game on the PlayStation. Also it was said that there was going to be five types of dinosaur, two unspecified with the others being the Tyrannosaurus Rex, Velociraptor and Pteranodon. In the original Design Doc for Dino Crisis GBC by Fluid Studios it is revealed that what they actually wanted to produce was a scaled down version of the original Dino Crisis: they wanted to keep all the original maps, plot-lines, dinosaurs, the look and feel of the original. This is quite a bold statement as the original was on the PlayStation 1 which is a more powerful system. Fluid were worried about the restrictive nature of the GBC especially in regards to the sprite size and how they would recreate the dinosaurs. The story had a very brief background written about it, there was to be an undercover agent (Regina) who had infiltrated the compound and was trying to capture Dr. Kirk and take him back to her government agency. Fluid also intended to have different game modes as bonus missions in which the player would have to kill a set amount of dinosaurs in a certain period of time. The document also writes about design elements in the game, the status screen was said to contain your inventory, mapping and you would be able to mix objects. As previously stated there would be 7 maps with about 100 rooms for the player to explore. There would also be different colour wall supply boxes that would require a corresponding key. These would allow you store your items in so that you could take them out when needed. There was also to be things called Danger Points in the game: this was when Regina was knocked to the floor with a dinosaur standing over her, a danger icon would flash on screen. The player would then have to press buttons as fast as possible to allow Regina to stand up without being attacked again. Many different Puzzles and Sub Games were also discussed, as a memory game, a jigsaw type game, a word game a pipe laying game and a logic game. Graphics were also talked about in the document and as they were restricted with what they could do with the GBC: they wanted to do re-rendered backgrounds. Fluid were also trying to develop a new technology that would use camera projections that would flatter the scaled sprites. Fluid also wanted to carry over atmospheric enhancements from the original PSX game such as blood dripping from Regina and moths flying around lights. It was also proposed that there would be a direction arrow on the screen that would help the player know where they had to go next, as the environments in such limited graphic style could have been confusing. Dinosaur-lovers favorite T-Rex was said to appear many different times throughout the game but it would not be able to be killed until the end. There is even a small list of when it would appear and attack Regina throughout certain



points of the game. Fluid understood how hard it would be to bring a graphical representation of the T-Rex to the GBC and so were deliberating on how they could show the scale of the beast so that it would look huge in comparison to the player. They suggested that one of the best ways to do this would be to draw the T-Rex as a background graphic which would then animate and scale. Also when the T-Rex was chasing Regina the camera would pan out so that Regina's sprite would be a lot smaller allowing them to put the size into perspective. Both M4 and Fluid Studios no longer exist and there is not much else reported on why neither of their Dino Crisis GameBoy Color games were canned, but Capcom also canceled the GBC version of Resident Evil and so it may be that they did not think that these portable versions were not good enough to uphold the popularity of the originals.

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FALL-ON

Article by: Jeff Wheaton

In the Gameboy Color's heyday, several developers at Acclaim Entertainment were working on a small game called Fall-On. It was designed as a side-scrolling adventure game that would break away from the standard 2D Metroid styled games. Players would take on the role of a person in a spacesuit who used a remote controlled drone to solve puzzles throughout the game's subterranean environments. By using the drone to enter otherwise inaccessible areas, the player was able to explore the planet they inhabited. If you were a Nintendo DS owner back in 2009, then this may all sound familiar to you. Another game called Moon, developed by Renegade Kid, would be released for the platform that same year. Taking many influences from Metroid and sharing a sci-fi, subterranean setting, Moon put players into the role of a protagonist in spacesuit with a remote controlled drone solving puzzles in the game's various maze-like environments. When Moon was released on the Nintendo DS, it was met with general praise, with critics enjoying the game's graphics and its smooth performance, though the sales were nothing special. As you can imagine, the similarities between Fall-On and Moon are not a coincidence. One of the developers of Fall-On, Jools Watsham, would go on to work at Renegade Kid after leaving Acclaim Entertainment. He would then help create Moon with the ideas from the canceled Fall-On. After the release of Renegade Kids' first person view survival horror Dementium: The Ward, many of the ideas from Fall-On would be recycled and adopted to Moon on the DS. The game would be built on the same engine as Dementium, so it too would be a first person adventure, unlike the 2D side scrolling Fall-On. The similarities between Fall-On and Moon don't end there. Judging by screenshots released by Jools Watsham, it seems that Fall-On would have taken place on some desolate alien planet instead of the moon. Moon's ending took place on a slightly similar-looking alien planet, but whether there is any connection between the two is unknown. As wrote before, Fall-On was going to feature a player-controlled drone (dubbed the Remote Search Droid) which would be used to solve puzzles. Moon featured a similar drone that performed the same tasks, but with a slightly different name of Remote Access Droid. However, unlike Moon's RAD droid, Fall-On's RSD was planned to have additional flight capabilities. In 2014, Renegade Kid would re-release Moon on the Nintendo 3DS eShop as Moon Chronicles. This digital-only version of the game is

identical to the original 2009 release except the gameplay was changed to stereoscopic 3D. The game was distributed episodically, with four episodic releases making up the entirety of the original game as a first season. There are plans to release a second season, but Renegade Kid has been quiet on the details. It certainly would be interesting, however, if any of the content from this unseen Gameboy Color version of Moon were to make its way into Moon Chronicles.

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INFINITY

Article by: Lindsay Schubert, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Infinity is a lost epic RPG in development in the early '00s for the Game Boy Color by a small but talented team named Affinix, composed of Justin Karneges, Hideaki Omuro, Melvin de Voor, Eric Hache, Mark Yohalem and Mathew Valente. At first the project was conceived as "Joltima II" since it was thought of as a sequel to cult-hit RPG Joltima which was released for the TI-83 series of graphing calculator, but it soon evolved into a full GBC title. The team put a lot of time and effort into the game Infinity was close to its completion and all it needed was a publisher. For a short time, Crave Entertainment was interested in the game and seeing its quality they wanted to promote the project at E3 2001. Just like in old school Famicom RPGs Infinity featured cute little sprites of characters living in a vast world overcome by two main threats. The Creator is one of the threats, though not much is unveiled about him: the game starts the player in the town of North Pass where it seems the King Aldric and Connor reside. Aldric is in charge of Connor, and they disagree on many issues, but the King's major problem is The Aluthans, a group that destroyed the whole town of Holbrooke. At news of its destruction, Aldric sends Connor to settle the conflict. Connor's ultimate goal would have been to explore the world, visit dungeons and collect shards to save the kingdom. From the official Infinity website (still online after so many years) we can read the introduction to the planned storyline: "The events of the past shape those of the present, and the sins of our fathers are repaid with our suffering. So is it that two races have fought a vicious war over a centuries-old betrayal. The Aluthans and Selerans, once great allies, have now become persecuted and persecutor. As the Aluthans endure the abuses of the conquering Selerans, the Selerans themselves are laid low by a life consuming plague. Awakened by the terrible misery of the world, an ancient evil begins to stir. Now, a handful of heroes, the only ones to realize the great darkness that is gathering, must find a way to save their world before it is too late." Infinity's turn-battle system would have been easy to control: other than regular attacks, magic (SP) was used and it appears that the actions were tied to the direction pad for easy and quick usage. During an interview Eric Hache, music composer of Infinity, stated "The battle system is very ingenious, it is controlled by the D-Pad yeah. You point with the D-Pad towards the enemy you want to target and then you hit A to do normal attacks, or you don't use the d-pad, select an item or a spell and then select your enemy. It's one of the fastest rpg systems I've played. Quite enjoyable!" Even if Infinity could have been one of the best RPG ever released on the Game Boy Color, unfortunately Crave Entertainment predicted that it would not do well since it was being released for GBC while the newly introduced Game Boy Advance was emerging on the market. Crave abandoned the game and Infinity was never seen again. After the game's cancellation Affinix was close to becoming involved with Metro3D to create a new game for the Game Boy Advance, but nothing came out of the deal in the end. Affinix was soon disbanded and were not able to release any game. Justin Karneges later worked on programming a messenger client

called Psi and recently he founded Fanout, a cloud service for pushing data to browsers and apps. Hideaki Omuro also known as “Crashman” seems to have moved to Japan where he began working for Irem. Eric Hache worked on other unreleased games such as Legend of Talibah, Shadow Incarnate and The Kudhos Project, but he’s still publishing music covers for video games on his Youtube and Soundcloud accounts. Melvin de Voor is still working on a multitude of art projects while Mark Yohalem has written scripts for games and even published a few books before he became a lawyer. Mathew Valente also kept up with his music talent and he remade the majority of the Chrono Trigger soundtrack for a lost 3D fan iteration of the game that would have been known as Chrono Resurrection. In august 2016, just a few weeks before the release of this book, Affinix released the playable Infinity prototype through their website and the unfinished game is now available to play along with its source code: "We estimate that Infinity is around 90% complete. The game was developed out of order so it's not the last 10% that is missing, but rather a bunch of parts throughout (this is why the preview ends fairly early on). Our plan is to finish the game eventually, but given how many years it has been, we can't make any guarantees. We've made the source code available to ensure that Infinity can live on regardless of what we do. Maybe if we don't finish the game anytime soon, someone else can. Or maybe what's playable can be ported to other platforms. We hope retrogamers will enjoy this little bit of history."

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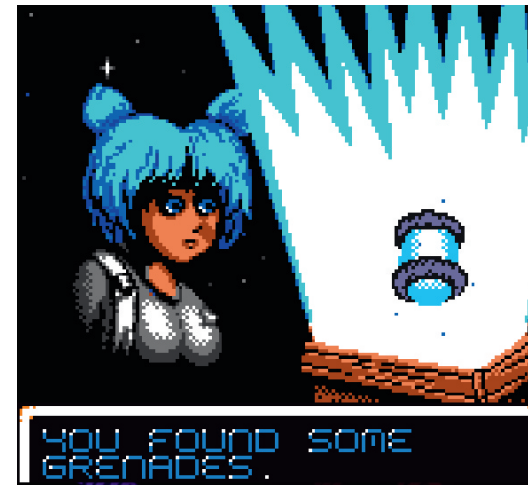
JET FORCE GEMINI

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The original Jet Force Gemini was an action adventure game developed by Rare and released on the N64 in late 1999. As it happened with other Rare games at the time (Perfect Dark and Conker), in 1999 / 2000 the company wanted to release a GameBoy Color version of JFG as well. They outsourced the project to Bits Studios, a team known for such critically acclaimed GBC games as Warlocked and R-Type DX. As we can read in an interview by Not Enough Shaders with Martin Wakeley (former Designer and Producer at Rare for Blast Corps and Jet Force Gemini): “JFG on the Gameboy was the only occasion I can remember Rare outsourcing anything. It was being done by Bits Studios and was nearly done last time I saw it, I’m not sure what happened to it. “ This version of Jet Force Gemini was never officially announced by Nintendo or Rare and in the end it was canned. As far as we know the game was basically completed and those who played it at the time remember that it was quite good for a GameBoy Color title. Rare paid Bits Studios for their work and received the final version of Jet Force Gemini GBC ready to be released, but for some reason they never published it. It’s possible that the GBC was going to be soon replaced by the new GBA, or maybe the GBC conversions of Perfect Dark and Conker were received with low interest by gamers and never sold enough copies to justify another port from Rare’s N64 titles. The world found out about Jet Force Gemini GBC in December 2009, when a collector (Dano2k0) in the Assembler Games Forum posted some photos from the playable prototype that he bought from an anonymous source.

Jet Force Gemini GBC was going to have an isometric top-down 2D view, while the gameplay was probably going to be similar to the N64 version, with lots of shooting and insects to kill. To downgrade the game to the GameBoy Color we can speculate that they had to remove the exploration "Metroidvania" aspect of JFG, to create a pure action shooter divided into linear levels to complete. Unfortunately we'll never know for sure, until someone finally leaks the prototype online. After the cancellation of Jet Force Gemini GBC, Bits Studios released a few games for GameCube, Xbox and PS2: Die Hard: Vendetta and Rogue Ops, while all their GBA projects were canned too (Jet Riders, Wizards). In 2008, as a result of low sales of their last games, Bits Studios' parent company, PlayWize, closed the team and sold all their assets. It was probably because of this sale that Dano2k0 was able to get his hands on the prototype a year later.



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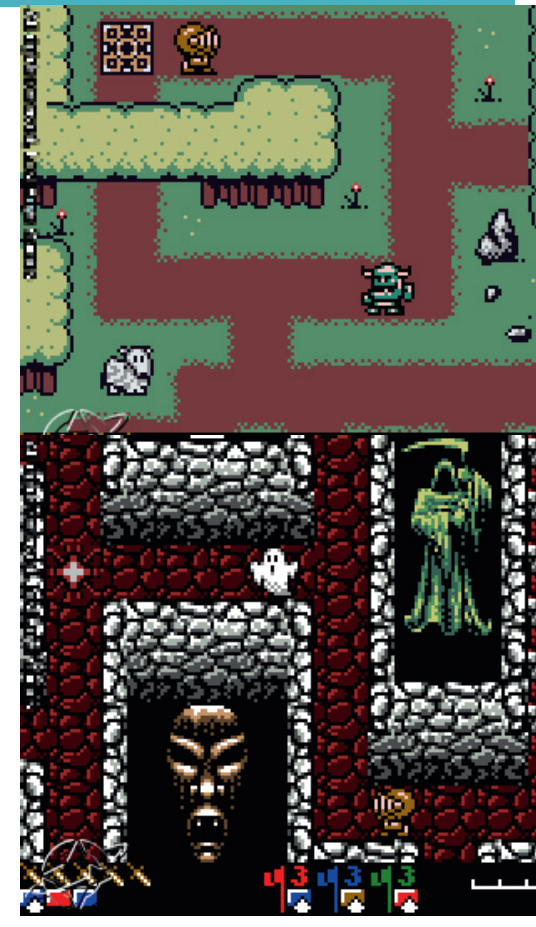
KNIGHTS

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Prior to their acquisition by Sony and going on to create the Killzone series, Guerrilla Games was a small development team based in Amsterdam, then known as Lost Boys Games; a subsidiary of Dutch multimedia conglomerate, Lost Boys. One of Lost Boys Games' internal teams was dubbed 'Formula'. This group was dedicated to handheld games, responsible for producing titles such as Rhino Rumble, and Tiny Toon Adventures: Dizzy's Candy Quest for GameBoy Color. One of their most interesting GBC projects, in development in around 1999-2000, was called Knights. Knights was an action brawler with a style of gameplay comparable to a blend of Bomberman and Gauntlet, in which players would have had to fight against 3 other knights in 50 different arenas riddled with traps, enemies, and various NPC's. This excerpt from an old IGN preview offers us further insight: "Each knight is colored differently, and the great challenge of the game is to strike down the knights in a predetermined order while protecting your own flank. Strike a defender before he becomes an official target, and the imperial judges will punish you with a penalty point." It's interesting to note that Knights GBC was based around the gameplay of another cancelled Knights project that was planned by Digital Infinity for PC and Dreamcast, before they merged with Lost Boys in 1999. Later, the original Knights for PC and Dreamcast was changed from a multiplayer brawler to a single player action

platformer and ported to Playstation 2, but that version was also canned. In 2003, Lost Boys Games was sold to Media Republic and renamed to Guerrilla Games. Their Knights projects were thus never finished, as they began to work on the first Killzone for PS2, and Shellshock: Nam '67 for PS2, Xbox, and PC. Only a few screenshots remain from Knights for GameBoy Color, as the title was soon cancelled for unknown reasons. We tried to get in contact with former Formula Games / Lost Boys developers, in an attempt to unearth more on this unreleased game, but unfortunately, they were not available for comment.

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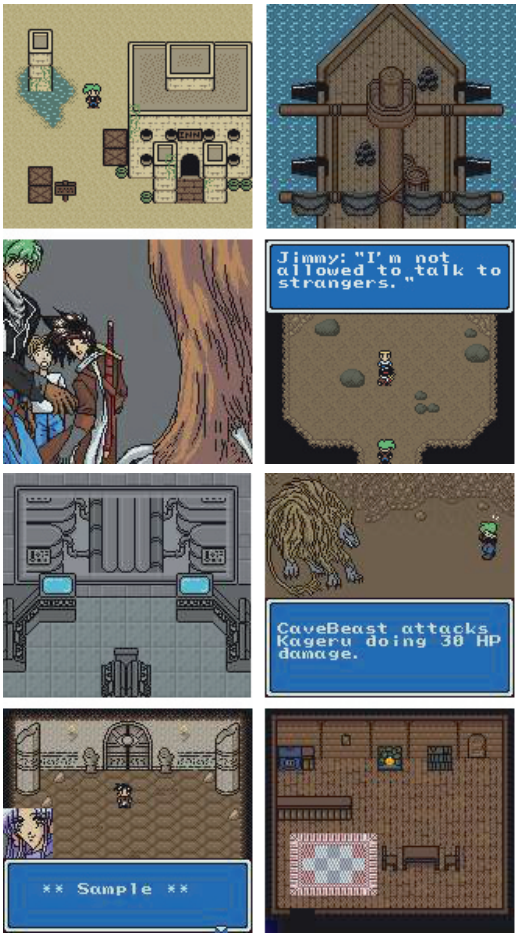
MYTHRI



Article by: Carlos Nieto

Mythri was a traditional Japanese Style Role Playing Game that started development in 1997 by Team XKalibur. The team was started by Tomm Hulett and Keith Martineau when they graduated high school, they had another game planned called Shattered Worlds, but that one got cancelled before even starting production, as to focus on Mythri. They continued developing for a few years until it's cancellation in 2005. Mythri was heavily inspired by anime of the time and games like Metal Gear Solid, which took storytelling in their respective forms to whole new levels. Apart from them, the team had a couple more people, but the most important ones were Carolyn Carter, an artist, and Ian Stocker, a composer. The game was a typical JRPG for the Game Boy Color in which the player would follow the story of the game while interacting with NPCs, fighting in random battles, and exploring the world. The game was meant to be a full scale console-like RPG, instead of the shorter ones that had appeared in portable systems at the time. The Game Boy Color was chosen as its platform due to the heavy competition in consoles at the time and also a desire of creating something on the scale of a console on a portable. Games for portable consoles around that time were usually smaller in scope. Development for the game was smooth at the beginning, but it slowed down around 2001 due to personal issues, but the biggest problem the game faced was a lack of a publisher. The game struggled like this from its beginning up until 2003. That year they got contacted by an old internet friend, who had started his own publishing company known as Variant Interactive. With this, the game started to be ported to the GBA as to attract funding. After communication and funding issues which made most of the team work with no pay, in 2005 Team XKalibur decided to break relationships with Variant Interactive and to cancel the project. Nowadays, the team hasn't really worked on anything together. Both Tomm and Keith worked at Atlus while developing Mythri, but afterwards that they both went their separate ways. Tomm still works on the industry, he worked at Konami for a few years, but in 2013 he left to become a Director in WayForward Entertainment, his first credited game as a Director is "Adventure Time: Explore the Dungeon because I don't know". Ian, the composer for the game, after working on multiple other games, has become an indie developer himself, most known for the game "Escape Goat." Mythri was a prime example of indie development back when it was pretty much impossible to be one. It was a game that was made by fans of the genre and it showed promise of being the first great Japanese Style Role Playing Game made in the west. It had quite an interesting story which can be read in certain online forums in which Tomm used to post,

with some amazing twists and some secrets that haven't been revealed, and maybe never will.

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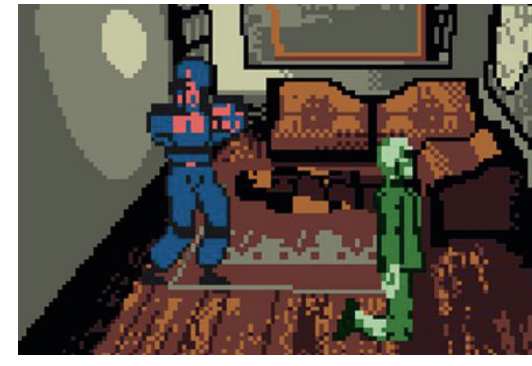
RESIDENT EVIL

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



The original Resident Evil (RE) was released by Capcom for PlayStation in 1996 but a few years later a port of the game was planned for the Gameboy Color (GBC). This was an unbelievable re-make for its time because the game would have featured the same third person camera and fixed backgrounds as the original. In a preview by IGN from September 1999 we can read that RE: GBC would have featured new enemies and a quick-save function. This version was in development by Hotgen, a UK-based software house mostly known for portable titles such as "Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine" and "Star Wars: Jedi Power Battles." Capcom wanted to publish this title in the winter of 1999 on a 4MB cart, but after a playable beta version was completed, they remained unimpressed by the quality of the product. Capcom quietly cancelled Resident Evil on the GBC by Hotgen in March of 2000 and put a new team in charge to create another Resident Evil for GBC. This new team was M4, a studio that impressed Capcom with a demo of Dino Crisis running on the GBC: in the end they successfully released Resident Evil: Gaiden for GBC in 2001. Many Resident Evil fans were not happy with RE: Gaiden as the cancelled version by Hotgen looked a lot more interesting. Luckily we were able to get our hands on the unreleased RE: GBC many years later. In February 2012, after a successful fundraising event organized by The Assembler Forum, two different beta builds of Resident Evil: GBC were shared with the community and gamers were finally able to play it. Many cut scenes, rooms and items from the PlayStation version are present in these beta builds, but apart from zombies every other enemy is either absent or not animated. The only weapons available in these betas are the handgun, the knife and the shotgun. By changing memory values from the ROMs in an emulator, or applying a bug fix patch made by Pacochan, it is possible to get to the final heliport, but there is neither a final boss nor an ending sequence. In the second build the main character's sprites, the font and some backgrounds are different, inventory chests do not work and only Chris is playable. Interestingly, the build documented in the September 1999 IGN preview seems to be yet another pre-release version of RE: GBC showing brown zombies and a few little changes in the backgrounds that are not present in the released ROMs. As of late 2015 Hotgen is still active and they released To-Fu: The Trials of Chi for iOS.

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SAFFIRE

Article by: J. Longbow, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Although not the most well known company name of the time, Saffire Corporation was a video game developer responsible for several games in the late '90s and early '00s, such as Rampage: World Tour, Oddworld Adventures 1 & 2, and more. Founder Les Pardew initially worked as an artist for video game developer Sculptured Software, who specialised in porting arcade games to home consoles. Pardew partnered with another Sculptured employee, Hal Rushton, and created Cygnus Multimedia in the early 90's. In 1994, they renamed the company to Saffire Corporation and went from six employees based in Pardew's basement to well over a hundred, in a matter of a few years. With the swift growth of the company and the amount of employees, Saffire was able to make a name for itself in the developer world; a name that allowed them to work with many publishers such as Konami, Nintendo, Electronic Arts, Midway, and GT Interactive. They had many games developed throughout their lifespan, however a number of them were eventually cancelled. One such game was an RPG named Saffire (initially a lost Nintendo 64 title called Young Olympians), a game intended for the Nintendo's Project Dolphin (later known as the Gamecube), the Game Boy Color and Game Boy Advance. The Game Boy Color version was notable for featuring a seldom seen feature on the handheld; Parallax Scrolling. This was a visual technique in which background images move more slowly than images in the foreground, creating the illusion of depth and immersion. Although it is fairly common with games today as graphical technology has become much more advanced, at the time it was a relatively underused technique as it took a lot of memory, with cartridges only holding so much data. Settings for Saffire were based on greek mythologies, as we can read from an old article on IGN: "The basic storyline of Saffire revolves around ancient Grecian myth. As the tale goes, in ancient times the god Zeus saw that the other gods were carelessly destroying the planet. To end this, he decided to seal off all of his enemies into the underworld, whereupon he himself swore never to return to the Earth. Centuries later, in modern times, a group of archaeologists accidentally stumble upon the dangerous seals and open them, letting loose all the destructive gods of ancient past. Zeus watches from afar, but ironically, because he swore never to return, cannot do anything to stop the madness. Zeus enlists the help of teenage gods to put an end to the chaos engulfing the planet." Saffire for GBC would feature one character traveling between worlds utilizing "a unique magic system." Leaked screenshots have shown the combat system and gameplay to be somehow similar to Zelda 2: The Adventure of Link, with a top-down view for exploring the overworld and a side-scrolling view for dungeons and combat. As there are not many games that follow Zelda 2's gameplay, Saffire could have really been an interesting title to play on the portable console. Today, Saffire Corporation is no more, claiming insolvency in 2004 before going out of business entirely. Their last game to be developed was Thunderbirds for the GBA in August, 2004. Hal Rushton went on to become a technical management consultant to game developers and publishers, while Les Pardew went on to develop websites. It may never be known why Saffire GBC was cancelled. Around the time of the game's development, the GBA was gaining popularity and Project Dolphin was on the horizon; which meant the GBC was less favoured over emerging technology and more powerful systems. Perhaps an insight we have to the cancellation of this games is in one of the last statements made by Dave Rushton (Game Boy artist and designer for Saffire Corporation) stated in an interview with

Nintendo World Report in 2000: “We want to make great games that are so fun to play. If it’s not fun and it’s not great, I don’t want my name on it. And we really feel that way, really strongly... If a game’s not fun, then why play it?" After many years of development and gameplay changes, Saffire Corporation were finally able to release their “Saffire” Dolphin tech demo as a full game in 2002 (for GameCube, PS2 and Xbox), under the name “Barbarian”. Unfortunately it was just a simple hack ‘n slash and it was poorly received.

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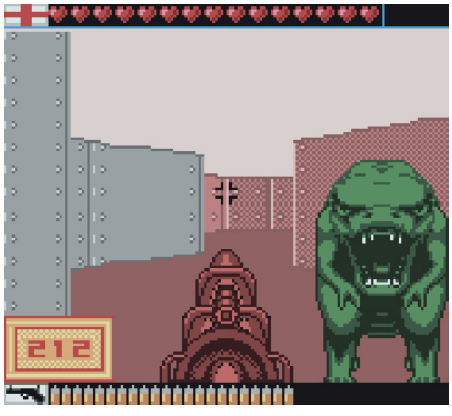
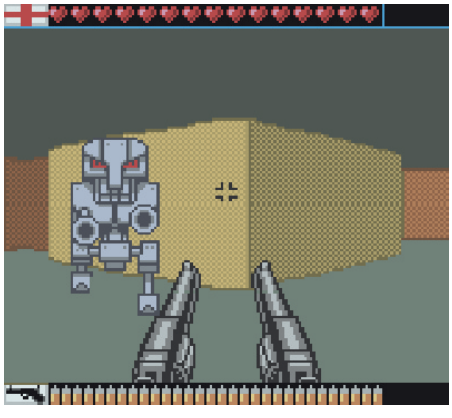
TYRANNOSAURUS TEX

Article by: Jesse Cook





There are certain games that come out, or are on the verge of coming out, that truly show how otherworldly the video game industry can be, and also how much the culture has grown over the years. Tyrannosaurus Tex is one of those games that, upon reflection, compels one to wonder how such a comical concept ever gained mainstream industry attention. This is certainly not intended to be a jab at Tyrannosaurus Tex as a game; nor is it an insult to Ben John, the former Psygnosis programmer and founding member of Slitherine Software, which developed the game. Rather, this comment is a reflection on the genesis of contemporary video gaming, and a genuine expression of awe at how rich and diverse the history of video games is. Tyrannosaurus Tex was an ambitious FPS planned for the Game Boy Color that, according to the website Nintendoplayer.com, told the “fanciful fable” of an alien spacecraft that crash landed in Texas 2,000 years in the past: “As the [alien] bots make repairs to their spacecraft, they build a grand underground city where they uncovered dinosaur fossils. With the help of their advanced alien technology, they pull a page from a Michael Crichton novel and revive the dinos, patching them up with spare parts from their ship. For years and years, the robots and cyborg dinosaurs live harmoniously together. That is, until gun-totin’, diamond-speculatin’ cowboys from the nearby town of East Wood show up and discover their secret world.” The whole thing sounds rather farcical in comparison to modern video game narratives like Bioshock, Uncharted, and The Last of Us, but it is important to note that T-Tex was in development during the height of hyperbolic game narrative, sharing the limelight with games like Duke Nukem, Quake, and Wolfenstein. In fact, these games were highly influential for Slitherine Software as they developed the game from 1999 to 2001. The obvious connection to these games is seen immediately when one views the screenshots available. Though, of course, T-Tex maintained a uniquely off kilter aesthetic considering that players would control a spelunking cowboy who dealt Wild West justice to reanimated cybernetic dinosaurs and their alien progenitors. Based on Nintendoplayer.com’s interview with Ben John, and their own accumulated research on the game, Tex would have wielded several different weapons throughout the game including a Colt 45, which would serve as the standard weapon Tex would have throughout his adventure; a Harpoon Gun, that fired controllable projectiles that could be steered in the air; a laser rifle and a grenade launcher. In addition, the creators also intended to have a spiffy P.U.L.S.E. rifle, which would have decimated enemies, but had minimal ammunition sources. Much like Doom before it, T-Tex would have melded the familiar with the fantastic, bringing the traditional six-shooter into the game initially, only to provide players with futuristic weapons based off the alien antagonists that Tex would eventually face. In addition, T-Tex would have also provided players with one of the few opportunities to use the GBC link cable to play multiplayer deathmatches. It appears that the technology at the time would only allow two players to link up to play together, but considering mobile gaming at the time of the Tex’s development, this

achievement would have been the first of its kind. From the few screenshots available, players could compete against each other as either cowboys or dinosaurs, in a similar fashion to Left 4 Dead. The game would have provided several different characters to choose from, ranging from the title character, to dinosaurs and robots. Each character would be imbued with specific abilities based on their traits that created a system of strengths and weaknesses. Heralded as the first "3D" first-person adventure game to come out on a handheld console, T-Tex took many cues from contemporary PC shooters and attempted to implement them in the Game Boy Color. This, for the time, was unprecedented as the limitations of the Game Boy system seemingly rendered the task impossible. However, according to Nintendoplayer.com, Slitherine Software developed a custom in-house engine, named “SLIT3D,” that expanded the 56 color limitations of the GBC to 2,000 separate color options, as well as manipulated graphics to produce a crude 3D engine that mimicked the technology present on PC computers at the time. Of course, this software meant that character animations were incredibly limited and did not actually represent 3D graphics. Regardless, the engine was an impressive piece of technology that was far ahead of other GBC games of that time. This impressive software, more than the narrative that the game intended to tell, drew the attention of Eidos Interactive, now Square Enix Europe, developer of Tomb Raider, Hitman, and Deus Ex, among other titles. Eidos worked with Slitherine over the two-year development cycle of the game, and even produced official box art for the title in preparation for its release. However, the game was eventually put on the shelf, surprisingly by Slitherine, after frustrations regarding Nintendo’s then questionable royalty policies concerning developer remunerations. According to an IGN article from 18 April of 2001, Slitherine posted a response to confused gamers regarding the cancellation of T-Tex, explaining why they chose to hold off on releasing Tyrannosaurus Tex: “Well, we've had a fairly rough time over the last few months trying to get a publishing deal nailed down for T-Tex. Most of the problems stem from the high royalty rates Nintendo charge for the cartridges and the low margins that result out of it. Anyway, enough of the problems, here's what we're going to do about it... We're still looking to get T-Tex published, but (this may seem a bit radical) we've decided not to make any more GBC games. To decide what we were going to do next we had to look at a number of factors. We didn't want to get caught in in the royalty trap that we are in at the moment with the GBC cartridges. This meant moving away from GBC and GBA. We looked at the skills we as a company have - between us we've worked on some of the most popular strategy games out there including Red Alert, Dune 2000 and Dune Emperor. What sort of games do we want to make - this again came down to strategy games of some form.” Unsurprisingly, the downfall of the game came from conflicts of capital, but the fact that Slitherine chose to walk away from the deal, rather than a parent company like Eidos or Nintendo, is relatively rare in the world of video game development. It is not often that a company that has spent years working on a project decides to cut it short based on their own decision to seek a more profitable venue for their creation. This certainly earns those working at Slitherine a nod of respect considering the cut-throat tactics of video game production, especially in the early 2000s. Now, the company continues to produce RTS games much as they did after cancelling T-Tex in 2001. Current games listed on their website at the time of the publication of this text include a slew of Warhammer 40,000 games, as well as a Napoleonic War game, and various other World War II and military RTS games. It does not appear that the company did anything as groundbreaking as the software they developed for T-Tex in the wild days of early modern video game development. And for those interested in seeing extensive content related to T-Tex, Nintendoplayer.com was fortunate enough to acquire a development copy of the game through an online auction in 2013, and have compiled an extensive collection of images and material related to the game’s development process. They even managed to obtain an interview with Ben John. The quality and sheer richness of the graphics that Slitherine Software managed to draw from the Game Boy Color is impressive, and makes the reality of the game’s cancellation that much more disappointing. The ability of the team to push the graphic capabilities of the console may have changed gaming graphics in incredible ways. Regardless, much like the dinos that Tex would have shot full of holes throughout his adventures in the alien mines of Texas, T-Tex is another relic of gaming’s past.

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SNES, MEGA DRIVE (GENESIS)

Article by: Sam Minnich, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

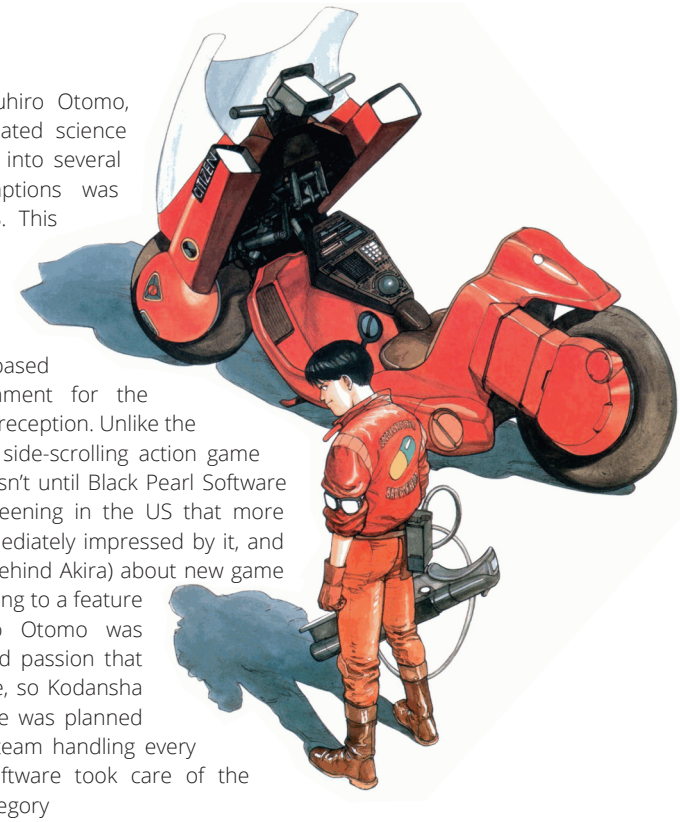
Nintendo's success with the NES was huge to say the least and their 8-bit console had become a household name having sold over 60 Million units worldwide. It's easy to see how the company made a safe bet when they announced their new 16-bit console, naming it the Super NES, released in Japan in 1990. However, Sega beat them on time, releasing their 16-bit console almost 2 years before: the Sega Mega Drive / Genesis became a stable competitor for Nintendo and the two companies fought head to head during the 4th generation of consoles. Both systems have their own technical pluses when compared to the other. The Super Nintendo had what was called "Mode 7", where the system could render wide scrolling sprite backgrounds, often used in racing game tracks and for RPG overworlds. Sega boasted something they called "blast processing", which was advertised as being able to sport faster games than the SNES, but while the Genesis had some faster games the term was mostly a marketing concept. Many will argue which system was the real winner during the 16-bit battle of Nintendo vs Sega, but in terms of sales the Genesis achieved roughly 43 Million systems sold worldwide, while Nintendo sold almost 50 million Super Nintendo systems. Both consoles sported games that would influence their generation for decades to come and each one had their own cult following of fans. The Genesis boosted cool "hip" games targeted at teens and great arcade ports for titles such as Space Harrier, Mortal Kombat, Afterburner II, Altered beast, Golden axe, Streets of Rage and Outrun. Sega's 16-bit system also became well known because of its blue hedgehog: Sonic the Hedgehog. The series became Sega's mascot franchise to go head to head with Nintendo's Super Mario. This well-known clash caused many heated schoolyard debates across the globe. While the Genesis had its fast paced arcade games, Treasure exclusives (Gunstar Heroes, Dynamite Headdy, Alien Soldier, Light Crusader), Sega-supported RPGs (Phantasy Star, Shining Force, Beyond Oasis) and edgy / mature characters (Sonic, Ecco the Dolphin, Shinobi, Comix Zone, Toejam and Earl, Chakan: The Forever Man), the SNES was known for its more traditional action-platformers (Super Mario, Donkey Kong, Castlevania, Mega Man), Japanese RPGs (Final Fantasy, Secret of Mana, Chrono Trigger, Super Mario RPG, Dragon Quest, Romancing SaGa) and classic Nintendo franchises (Super Mario Kart, Zelda: A Link to the Past, Star Fox, Kirby, F-Zero, Pilotwings). Both consoles also had numerous multi-platform releases by third party studios, with games such as Battletoads, Disney and Marvel platformers, Street Fighter, ClayFighter, many sport games, Contra, Double Dragon and Earthworm Jim. In the end the Genesis had more than 950 games released for it, while the Super Nintendo had more than 1.400 published titles, at least in Japan. As time went by Nintendo and Sega found themselves in the mid-nineties: games began to have a visual shift, from flat to solid. Both Nintendo and Sega tried 3D graphics on their 16-bit consoles at the time, with games like Starfox on the SNES using the FX chip and Virtua Racing on the Genesis using the Sega Virtua Processor. It was time for a new generation of proper 3D-capable consoles: in 1997 Sega discontinued the Genesis, while the Super NES was discontinued by Nintendo in 1999 in America and in 2003 in Japan. 16-bit consoles have seen a lot of strange tie-in games for popular TV shows, movies and comic book franchises, and those are also a big part of the list of cancelled games for SNES and Genesis, along with obscure Japanese RPGs, failed VR experiments and edgy mascot platformers. While it's hard to find out detailed info on planned 16-bit games that never were (a lot are still hidden away in old Japanese magazines or forgotten by their own developers after so many years passed) in the following pages we tried to recollect a few meaningful lost titles and curious projects that define the general direction of an entire generation.

SNES
MEGA DRIVE

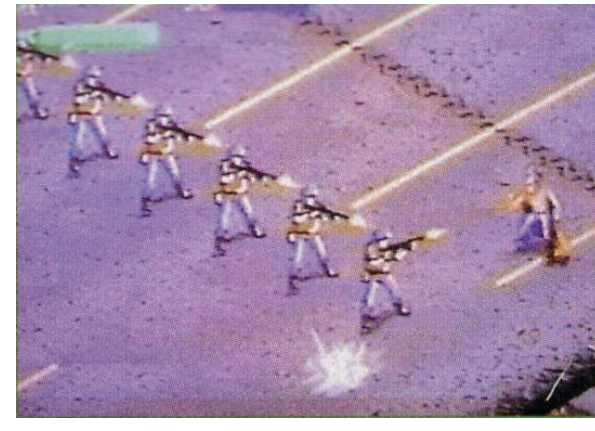
This page was cancelled by Nintendo Ninjas
Sorry for the inconvenience

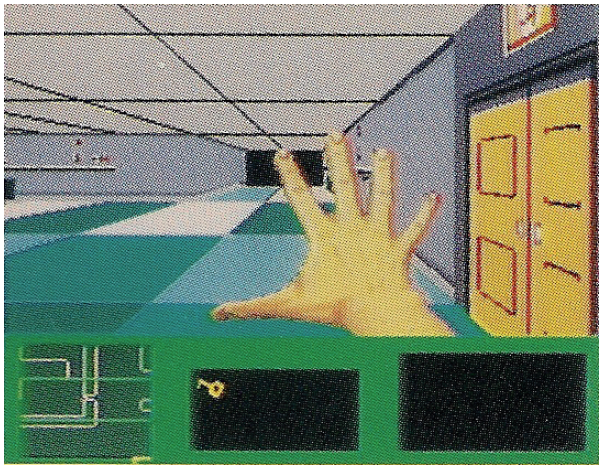
AKIRA

Article by: Damiano Bacci (Blek)



Originating as a manga written by Katsuhiro Otomo, Akira was adapted into a Japanese animated science fiction film, and then adapted once more into several video games. The first of these adaptions was developed by Taito in 1988 for the NES. This version of Akira was a visual novel-style game in which the player talks to people and selects actions from a list, with not much more to gameplay than that. The next adaptation was developed by UK-based studio International Computer Entertainment for the Amiga CD32 in 1994, unfortunately to poor reception. Unlike the former game, this version of Akira was a side-scrolling action game that suffered from poor level design. It wasn't until Black Pearl Software head Larry Siegel saw Akira during a screening in the US that more adaptations were planned. Siegel was immediately impressed by it, and decided to contact Kodansha (the studio behind Akira) about new game ideas for the home console market. According to a feature in an issue of Game Zone, Katsuhiro Otomo was particularly impressed with the energy and passion that Siegel was putting in his pitch of the game, so Kodansha handed the license over to him. The game was planned for a variety of systems, with a different team handling every version. Larry Siegel and Black Pearl Software took care of the Genesis and Game Gear versions, Jim Gregory and his team at Hand Made Software worked on the SNES version, while Ice Software handled the development of the Game Boy version. A Sega CD version was planned, though no development ever took place. Gameplay for each of the different Akira versions varied immensely. The SNES version had the player navigating a map in order to move to different locations and complete different objectives. The main character (Kaneda) would then drive to that selected destination and fight enemies along the way (these particular scenes used the capabilities of the SuperFX chip of the SNES). Once arrived to the destination, the game will went on a classical side-scrolling action, as Jim Gregory explains in an interview with John Szczepaniak: "This was a walk-run-jump-crawl-swing-shoot section, to obtain vital game elements that unlocked other missions and objectives. Kaneda had access to several vehicles including his super motorcycle and the hover-bikes featured in the comics. The style was side on action adventure. Each section had an animated (boss) completion scene that aimed to match the graphics of the film." Meanwhile, the Genesis version developed at Black Pearl Software followed a different design that mixed various styles. Phil Theobald on the NeoGAF forum had a chance to play this version of the





game at the 1994 Summer CES, and reported that it chronologically followed the events of the movie. There was a motorcycle racing stage where Kaneda had to race the Clowns, a FPS style stage where you gain control of Tetsuo and his psychic powers, an isometric style stage with Tetsuo on a bridge, a side-scrolling stage with Kaneda and Kei piloting a hover vehicle through the sewers, and a typical 2D beat-em-up stage. Tom Meigs of Black Pearl Software confirmed to John Szczepaniak that they were also developing the Game Gear version, albeit in a different office (California) than the Genesis version (Chicago). The game was roughly 30% complete and it followed the same scheme of the Genesis version. As for the Game Boy version, Jim Gregory recalls how Ice Software made an adaptation of another released game and rebranded it as Akira, but it's currently unknown which games that was. It's also unknown what connections exist between International Computer Entertainment and Ice Software that lead to both UK studios working on separate versions of Akira. Akira's story is quite complicated, with multiple companies involved without knowing each other's involvement. Jim Gregory stated: "It was not so much cancelled or scrapped as it fell into neglect. Larry transferred rights to THQ and we couldn't get clear agreement on the game elements with the project manager. They didn't understand the limitations of the SNES. The project was then victim to a number of disasters including the lead programmer leaving, and other work being more pressing." With this project going in the trash, gamers had to wait until 2002 for another Akira video game to be released, which was a pinball game called Akira Psycho Ball for the Playstation 2.

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ALBERT ODYSSEY GAIDEN

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Albert Odyssey Gaiden: Memories of Wings is a cancelled SNES turn-based RPG that was being developed in the mid-nineties at Sunsoft, a Japanese software house mainly known in the West for Blaster Master and Journey to Silius. The planned release date was February 1995, but the SNES game was quickly abandoned and ported to Saturn where its subtitle changed to "Legend of Eldean". From magazine scans and the little information available it seems that apart from better graphics, which of course became far more detailed on Saturn (the small battle portraits of the SNES version in particular became huge,

colourful avatars) not much else changed. Plot, setting, the main characters and their antagonists remained essentially unchanged. Even most of the basic enemies and spells were carried over. We do not know exactly why Memories of Wings was never completed, but in all likeliness Sunsoft assumed that it would have sold better on Saturn. In August 1996, Albert Odyssey: The Legend of Eldean was finally released in Japan. One year later Working Design translated the game and published it in North America. Sunsoft is still active as far as mid 2016 and is mostly working on making its classics available on modern platforms.

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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Christopher Columbus (aka Xpo-Ferens Columbus) is a canceled shoot 'em up that was in development by an unknown team for the Super Nintendo from 1992 to 1993 that was to be published by Misawa Entertainment. The game was loosely based on the famous Italian explorer, but with a fantasy twist: his ship was able to fly and shoot energy bullets to take down huge mammoths, weird sea creatures and ancient dragons. It seems that Christopher Columbus was almost complete, it was even promoted in a catalog with other titles by Misawa Entertainment sometime around 1992 to 1993, but in the end the game was, for unknown reasons, never released. Artwork for this lost game was believed to have been created by famous Japanese artist and mangaka Katsuya Terada, who also did concept art for The Legend of Zelda (NES), Link's Awakening (GBC) and A Link to the Past (SNES). We tried to get in contact with Katsuya to ask about his involvement with Christopher Columbus, but unfortunately, did not get any reply. With its weird premises and the mystery behind its development team, this game will remain one of the most bizarre canceled games for the SNES.

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DREAM: LAND OF GIANTS

Article by: Conor Hutton

Dream: Land of Giants is an unreleased seafaring action RPG that was in development for the SNES by Rare Ltd in mid '90 and was to be their masterpiece, hoping to create something that could have been on par with such titles as Zelda: a Link to the Past and Secret of Mana. Part of the Donkey Kong Country team was working on Dream with the project being headed by Gregg Mayles and Tim Stamper. Nobody outside of the core development team knew anything about the game and for many years it remained a legendary and mysterious concept. Later in its development cycle,

Dream was moved to the N64 before being completely revamped as Banjo-Kazooie. For the lost SNES version the team at Rare were using the advanced computer modeling techniques of bitmapping pre-rendered graphics already used in Donkey Kong Country. One of the musical composers for the game, Grant Kirkhope, described the early SNES demo of Dream's introduction sequence and opening level as being beautiful for its time. However, during the game's development it was decided that the SNES could not handle this ambitious RPG so it was moved to the soon-to-be-released Nintendo 64 and redeveloped in 3D, similar to what Nintendo was planning with the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. The team created a new 3D terrain system for making huge explorable environments, which was achieved by stretching out polygons. Unfortunately, even the N64 lacked the processing power to maintain these 3D environments at a steady frame rate. Taking inspiration from the Killer Instinct team's Conker 64 along with Rare's own experience, they decided to stop their RPG concept and redevelop Dream as a 3D platformer akin to Super Mario 64. Grant Kirkhope actually reckoned that it was the fact that Conker was running so well that put the 'final nail in the coffin for Dream". Dream's audio director was Dave Wise and the aforementioned composer Grant Kirkhope joined at a later stage. Kirkhope is known for his work on Banjo-Kazooie and other games such as Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning. While speaking on the subject of music in Dream Kirkhope said that Stamper wanted "a very theme based game so as you could tell what character was around by just hearing a few notes from their theme". In the end Kirkhope wrote 107 tunes for Dream some of which you can listen to on his own website and others have turned up in some form or another in other Rare games such as Banjo-Kazooie, Viva Piñata: Trouble in Paradise, and Donkey Kong 64. Initially Dream was focused on a fairy-tale aesthetic with trolls and huge dinosaur-like monsters, but that was later changed to a fully pirate theme on the N64 version because Rare wanted the game to appeal to a wider audience. Dream would have told the tale of a young adventurer named Edison and his girlfriend Madeleine who got into trouble with some pirates on the ship Mudplugger, which was under the leadership of Captain Blackeye. Outside of disposing of Edison and co. Captain Blackeye had a little side project of his own: he had discovered a rare material known as Floaty and he wanted to gather up enough to build a flying pirate ship out of it. This would have allowed Captain Blackeye to conquer both land and sea. Unfortunately for

Edison, Tim Stamper felt that the whole boy hero thing was a little bit cliché and he looked to the woodland creatures planned for the game to find a replacement, eventually settling on Banjo the bear as the new protagonist. The transformation from Dream to Banjo-Kazooie was immense: what started out as a huge 16-bit seafaring RPG starring a little boy on the SNES turned into a 64-bit platforming game starring a bear and a bird on the N64. As is the case with a lot of the canceled games mentioned in this book we do not have a lot of details on what the gameplay could have been on the Super Nintendo. However, a video released by Rare on Youtube in December 2015 has revealed a little information. The clip shows Edison walking, running, swimming and using a wooden sword to combat against a green ogre like creature. The other main tool at Edison's disposal was his pet dog Dinger who he would have found at the beginning of the game. Dinger had a mind of his own and could scout the lands ahead of Edison and dig in certain areas to find items for the boy. The only other thing the short video showed off was a giant dinosaur foot. Players would never have actually scene the whole dinosaur, but the screen would have started shaking when it got near as a warning and player would have had to quickly move aside or they would have been squished. As Dream made the transition over to Banjo-Kazooie some new features were added, such as the double jump, which became a good excuse to add a second character in the bear's backpack: Kazooie was the reason why Banjo could jump higher. In early builds of the platform version of Dream on the N64, Banjo was styled after a skater look and even pulled off skater moves when he jumped. However Rare decided this wasn't as cool as they initially thought it would be and removed those animations. Dream's Captain Blackeye was later scrapped as the main antagonist, but he actually does make an appearance in Banjo-Tooie at Jolly's Tavern in Jolly Roger's Lagoon where he repeats the words "I had a dream...". Blackeye had a crew which consisted of Grim Jim, Flintlock Jock, Cockeye and the aptly named Big Belly (who was known for eating and drinking just a little too much). Piccolo, named after the instrument used to make her theme, was originally Banjo's girlfriend and was later renamed Tooty and became his sister. There was also a human-like rabbit who was considered for the protagonist's role when Edison was deemed to be to cliché, however the rabbit also failed to make the cut. Then there was Grunty the giant who later became Gruntilda the witch. Dinger the dog was also considered for Edison's role but lost out to Banjo. Then there was a secondary character called Tiptup, that was reused as a playable driver in Diddy Kong Racing and Banjo-Pilot, and as an NPC in Banjo-Kazooie and Banjo-Tooie. As far as we know Kazooie also appeared in Dream, but as a baby bird who was found in a nest by Ella. Little did she know that Kazooie would have become a very important character and that Rare's dream of an ambitious SNES action RPG would have never been fulfilled.

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FELICIA

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Felicia is a cancelled turn-based JRPG that was going to be published by Tonkin House for the Super Famicom in March 1995. In the early '90s Tonkin released a few other cult hit RPGs for Japanese PCs and consoles such as Blodia, Cyber Knight and Ys III: Wanderers from Ys. Unfortunately there is basically no information about Felicia, its developers are a mistery and we only know about this lost project because of a short article in a French gaming magazine (Super Power magazine issue #28). It seems that Felicia was the name of the main character and that she "is forced to embark on a dangerous journey for tragic reasons." From the only two images currently available it seems unusual for a turn-based RPG, as in the exploration phase the action was viewed from the side in a isometric graphic style. In late '90s Tonkin House was supposed to be the publisher of Tennis Daisuki, an ultimately cancelled PlayStation game. As far as we know their last released title was D-A:BLACK, published for PS2 in 2003. Felicia remains one of the most obscure yet fashinating RPGs never released for the SNES and we can only hope that one day we could find more info and screenshots in some old, forgotten japanese magazine.

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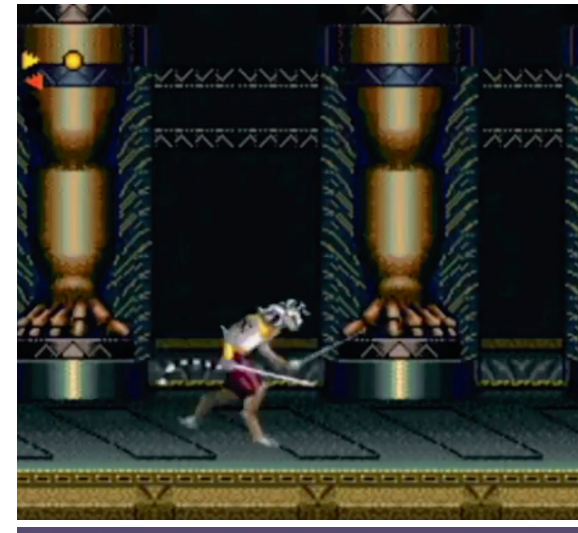
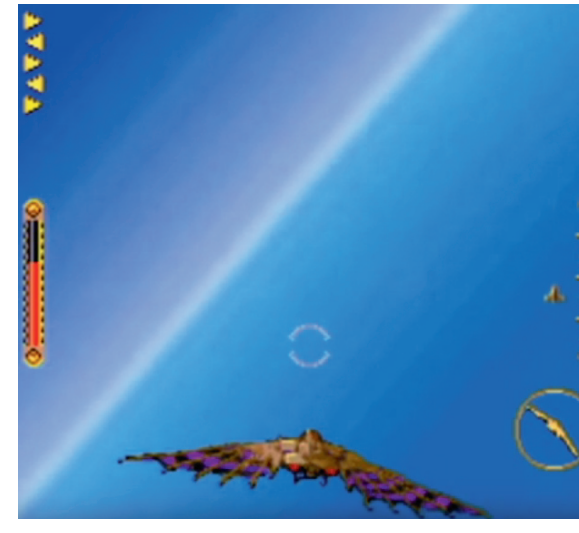
FIRETEAM ROGUE

Article by: Evan Gowan

Fireteam Rogue was a promising side scrolling action-adventure game developed by Accolade (a company mostly known for having published such popular titles as Bubsy, Test Drive and Star Control 2), set for release sometime between 1994-1996 for SNES and Genesis. In addition to a plethora of concept artwork, there are two prototypes of the game that have been found. Fireteam Rogue's cancellation is probably due to having too much ambition. The developers (or rather the people marketing the game) claimed it would have 100 hours of gameplay, and that the characters would be larger than in most other action games. Personality conflicts and poor management due to this goal seem to have taken their toll, as stated by Russell Borogove a former developer from Accolade: "The project had a lot of problems in development. We spent a lot more time developing ridiculous data compression schemes to fit all the levels into the game, when we should have cut a couple of enemies and a handful of levels in order to get it done. There were also some personality conflicts that culminated with the producer of the project quitting when we were at beta. Shortly after that, the head of product development at Accolade asked us if we thought we should continue the project or not. It was unclear to me how much more work it was going to take to finish it and if the game was going to be good enough to compete in the market by the time we actually got it out, and I advised that we should shut it down. I don't remember what the others said."
By the sounds of things, as development dragged on, it was increasingly clear it would not have been released.

As Fireteam Rogue's artist Scott Ruggels recalls: "Both of the game projects (ed note, Fireteam Rogue and the unreleased Genesis game, Cybernauts: The Next Breed) were helmed by John Skeel. I don't know what happened to him after Accolade, but after the 2 million dollar budget for the game was spent, with about 750,000 spent on promotional materials, including a 6 foot tall roll of plastic with a life sized image of the main character computer generated within, and the prototype, that was, in all honesty, not very much fun to play, the game was cancelled, along with a lot of others soon after the new management took over, and we went our separate ways, with me ending up at the 3DO company during the last days of the "Real Player" development days."





The media give differing times for the ultimate cancellation. Gamepro, in its April 1995 issue, states it was cancelled, coinciding with when the Warner Music Group bought a share in the company. Nintendo Power kept it in its upcoming releases section until the August 1995 issue. The first prototype of Fireteam Rogue was acquired by collector DreamTR in October 2005. Later, as he had two copies of the prototype, he ended up selling one. It was purchased by two collectors, known as Carnivol and Li Wang. The ROM image was then given to SNES Central and released online on December 18, 2006. This prototype is in a deep alpha state. The only level that really shows any semblance of completeness is the Shadowblade level (the mammal with swords). The game isn't very forgiving at this point, with no extra lives or continues. The animation is a bit jerky, and the controls are merely adequate. The graphics are pretty bland, with limited palette (these graphics were designed to work on the Genesis). The Shadowblade level shows off the ambitious level design intended for this game: even if incomplete the level is actually very large and full of secrets and items. A second prototype or Fireteam Rogue was acquired by SNES Central in June 2010. The seller worked at a company called IMN Control, which produced, among other things a one handed NES controller. IMN Control was looking into publishing games to package with their controllers, and it seems that by April 1995, Accolade was hoping to get another company to publish the game. The seller said that he did not feel the game would be completed in a reasonable amount of time to bother investing. This later alpha shows a more advanced state of completion. The primary addition to this version are the mode 7 shooter stages. These stages actually work fairly well, and allow you to target enemies with relative precision. Fireteam Rogue is definitely a game that had promise. It had an intriguing plot, excellent character artwork and a promising gameplay system. The Shadowblade level in particular shows the scope of what the levels may have entailed. That being said, the two alpha ROM images available show a game that is not close to completion. The level designs are poor, and lack the key items to proceed through the stages. The graphics themselves don't look bad, though they have a

limited palette. The promised linking of the levels into a single story was not accomplished. The screenshots from the February 1995 issue of Gamepro show scenes that are not in the alphas, but they could very well be mockups. In mid '90 Accolade suffered for low sales of their released games and had to lay-off many developers, while cancelling some games. After releasing Redline in 1999, Accolade was then bought by Infogrames while their assets seem to have been acquired by another company, Tommo Inc. The lesson of Fireteam Rogue is that focusing on hype and story before the creation of solid level design and gameplay can sink a game. The back-story of Fireteam Rogue rivals most contemporary RPGs, and the initial gameplay ideas could have rivalled Super Metroid. Instead, a development cycle mired by poor management and delays made this just another footnote in the history of the 16-bit era.

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INTERPLANETARY LIZARDS

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Interplanetary Lizards of the Texas Plains was an isometric action title developed by Alexandria Inc. for Sega Genesis. Based on the eponymous comic book, it was planned to be published by Tengen in 1994. The game was presented at 94 Winter CES and, according to an Italian magazine, Mega Console, it was slated for release in May 1994, but the game disappeared forever right around this time, even if was nearly completed. Some screenshots of this title appeared in a few gaming magazines such as Game Fan, but the descriptions that accompanied the images hardly contained any factual information; we thus know very little about Interplanetary Lizard, apart that it featured a two-player mode. In a 2015 e-mail interview with Unseen64, Scott Rogers (an artist that worked on Interplanetary Lizard) told us that he remembers “the game being mostly a shooter - each character had a different projectile - one had a pistol, one had a knife, one had dynamite, etc. It was similar to an isometric shooter with the same perspective as the museum levels in the SNES version of Demolition Man also developed by Alexandria. It probably used the same engine too”. He also added that Interplanetary Lizard was probably cancelled due to lack of money, or because the publisher realized that the original comic wasn’t popular and it could have been a commercial failure. Another user in the Sega Retro Forum speculated that the project folded because its publisher Tengen, already a subsidiary of Time Warner Interactive, was definitely incorporated with the latter in the middle of 1994. Moreover, in April 1994, Alexandria Inc. was bought by a company named CPTV, which likely thought that the game would have sold poorly, thus deciding to cancel it. Alexandria Inc. finally closed its doors in November 1995; some of its former employees joined Oddworld Inhabitants (another studio owned, at the time, by CPTV) shortly after, to help with the development of one of the most iconic early PlayStation games: Oddworld - Abe's Odyssey. In 2014 a few screenshots of a prototype version of Interplanetary Lizards of the Texas Plains (dated May 1994), were published on a Facebook page. According to the anonymous collector who shared it, most animations, BMG and sound effects were 100% complete, even though only a couple of levels were actually near completion, with the majority of the other stages being either playable but unfinished or still just placeholders. Every level included in this build (Black Springs, Gold Mine, Transylvania, Pirates, Catacombs, Chicago, Far Future) featured two acts and a boss.

The owner of this prototype described the game as a “decent 40-minute 2 player sort-of side-scroller meets isometric beat’em up in the vein of Streets of Rage and Final Fight”. Unfortunately, as of 2015, this proto hasn’t been dumped and shared online. After dropping Interplanetary Lizards, Alexandria, in 1995 released their two most iconic games, Demolition Man and Izzy's Quest Olympic Rings for Genesis and SNES. During its life, the American software house cancelled many other titles: the mysterious PlayStation games Max Mayhem and Myth, a 3DO ports of the point-and-click adventure “Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster”, a side-scrolling beat ’em up called Dynoblaze and two platformers for SNES and Genesis, Road Runners and The Head.

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IRON HAMMER

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Iron Hammer is a first-person Sci-Fi shoot’em up that was being developed by Novalogic (an American software house mostly known for PC-only franchises such as Comanche and Delta force) for Genesis’ SEGA VR headset in 1992 and 1993. Together with Nuclear Rush, Matrix Runner and Outlaw Racing, it was planned to be a launch title for the VR head-mounted display, which the release date for was Christmas 1993. Thanks to a couple of video and magazine previews (Iron Hammer was playable in an invite-only presentation at CES 1993) we know roughly how the game was played. You had to locate enemy’s positions on the radar and move the helmet to rotate the gunship’s cockpit view in the right direction. Going forwards or backwards, locking-on, shooting and changing weapons was still done with the normal joypad. Interestingly, the time of the day changed during the mission and the headset’s stereo speakers transmitted to players the co-pilots digitized voice. Iron Hammer featured over 30 different stages among which there were, according to an EGM article, “rocky terrains, grassy plains, ice zones and water zones”. A prototype of the game was also playable in 2008 at VGH2k8, an Italian gaming expo. In a video of the event we can have a look at a previously unseen introduction sequence and the level selection screen. Unfortunately, Iron Hammer got postponed and then cancelled like all the other SEGA VR games. The HMD technology was eventually used for the SEGA VR-1 motion simulator arcade attraction, released in 1994 at SegaWorld Arcades. In a Sega-16 interview, one of the engineers behind the project explained the reasons for the cancellation of the SEGA VR system: the helmet suffered from flickering and lag between the movement of your head and what happened on-screen, which could cause “a bad headache” or, even worse, “the same effect as being drunk”. The displays were of a very low resolution (256x320), but the main problem was that the SEGA VR could cause vision damage because it forced users to look outwards: “What I heard was the Sega lawyers brought up the liability issue on the eye damage. That is the reason I heard the project was cancelled”. Basically at the same time, in 1993, Novalogic was also working on another ultimately, infamous cancelled project: Super Mario Wacky’s Worlds for CD-I.

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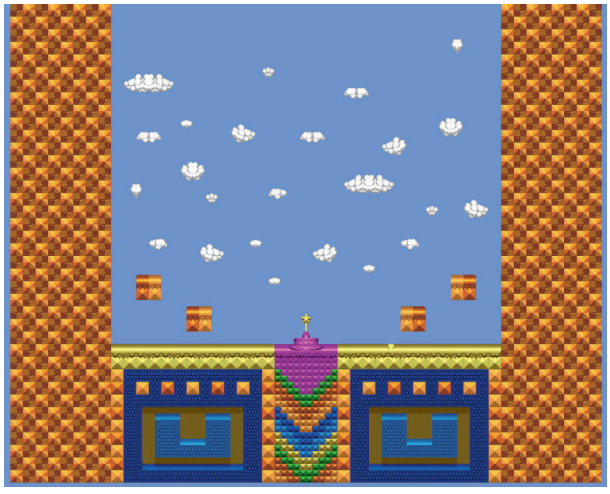
KID KIRBY

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Kid Kirby is a cancelled game that was in development from 1993 to 1995 by DMA Design, creators of such unique titles as Uniracers (SNES), Silicon Valley (N64), and Lemmings. Originally the project was conceived as an original DMA IP with the name "Jellys". Nintendo of America was interested in the project, but wanted to make the game into a showcase for the SNES mouse and offered the Kirby IP to make it more marketable. It was decided to make the game a prequel of the Kirby series, featuring a younger Kirby (with a hair tuft). Unfortunately, the mouse did not sell that well and according to the team, the game was not as fun when played with a traditional joypad, so it never saw the light of day. The first image from this game was published in 1995 by the Mexican edition of the Club Nintendo Magazine, but it was soon forgotten. It would be several years later that gamers worldwide would find out about this lost project. This was thanks to Michael Dailly, a former DMA Design developer, who uploaded more images from Kid Kirby on his Flickr account. Additional Kid Kirby renders were also discovered in a 1995 Nintendo Source Book binder intended for retailers only. These pictures were uploaded online by Tomato and Heidi Poe of Earthbound Central. There are no videos available from this unreleased project, but thanks to Michael we know how Kid Kirby's gameplay would have worked: "You clicked and pulled Kirby like an elastic band. He'd stretch from where he was sitting to where the mouse pointer was (it was a mouse game, although did work with gamepad), then when you let go he'd fly off like an Angry Bird from the catapult. Basically a platform game where you used this mechanic to move around." After Kid Kirby was canned in 1995, Michael Dailly started work on a prototype called "Race and Chase" that later became the first episode of one of the most popular game series ever: Grand Theft Auto, released in 1997. As of Mid 2016, Michael is working as Head of Development at YoYo Games the team behind the popular tool GameMaker.

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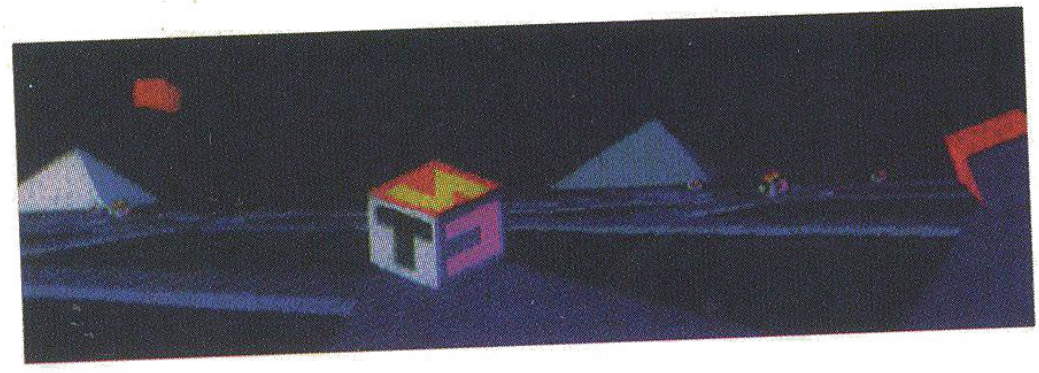
MATRIX RUNNER

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



Matrix Runner is an action puzzler that was in development at ZCT Systems Group in the biennium 1992-1993 for Genesis' SEGA VR. Together with the other VR titles, the game was briefly shown at summer CES 1993, and a short description of it, evidently based on a press release, was published on the most important video games magazines at the time: impersonating an elite superhacker, we had to explore the dark, winding landscapes of the matrix to find clues about the enigmatic disappearance of our colleagues. Sega called Matrix Runner "a dazzling hypnotic materialization of cyberspace, where players collide with strange semi-humans and vulture-like manifestations". Unfortunately, after the CES presentation, the game disappeared forever, just like the other SEGA VR titles. Thankfully, in 2015, the former owner of ZTC Systems Group, Greg Zumwalt, shared some information about Matrix Runner on the comments section of Unseen64. According to him, the game was 2/3 complete and ZCT programmers were beginning to work on the AI when Sega folded the project. Interestingly, in the CES demo, Matrix Runner was still controlled with a joypad, because, as Grem Zumwalt commented on Unseen64: "The headset was producing pitch, roll and yaw information at around .25 hertz, which was much too slow for an action game of this nature." This also appears to have been the main reason that ultimately led SEGA to cancel the game. Before working on Matrix Runner, ZCT Systems Group created some titles like "A Mazing World of Malcom Mortar" and "GFL Championship Football II", for the virtually unknown American HC TRS-80 Colour Computer. In 1993, they also developed for EA, a DOS game called "Michael Jordan in Flight". As far as we know, this was their last title.

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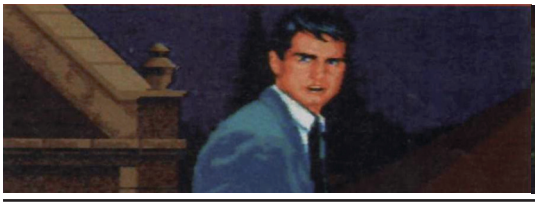
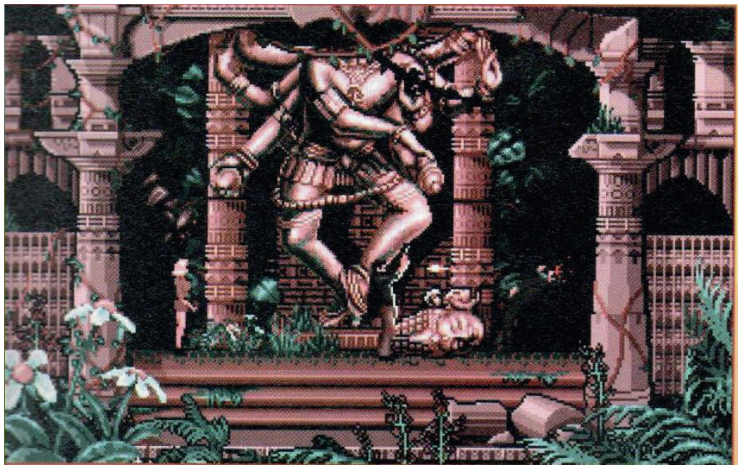
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Mission Impossible is an unreleased cinematic platformer that was in development in 1995 for Genesis and SNES at Merit Studios, a very obscure European team which in 1997 became Eutechnyx and mainly released racing titles. The publisher would have been Ocean, a British software house known at the time for their licensed games. According to previews published in some magazines Mission Impossible was the official tie-in of the eponymous 1996 movie and it used rotoscope animation like Flashback. The latter was also a source of inspiration for the gameplay, for example in a level set in the CIA headquarters that ended with the main character being picked up by a helicopter, aside from killing enemies, the player had to collect smart cards and disable video banks. Talking to other people to get clues and using your spy gadgets was likewise essential to finishing the mission. However, the game also featured more action-oriented stages, like one that took place in a Jungle, as well as levels viewed from above where the player controlled a boat, or an isometric stage in which we would have to escape in a train trying to dodge a pursuing helicopter by switching the





tracks. It is still unknown why this version of Mission: Impossible was cancelled, but we can speculate that it was because the 16-bit consoles were rapidly dying in 1995 and consequently Ocean thought that it would have sold better on a next-gen console. Mission Impossible 64 was finally released in 1998. In 2014 Eutechnyx released NASCAR '14 and Warhammer 40,000: Storm of Vengeance, but since 2013 the company suffered a few restructures, losing several employees.

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RAYMAN

Article by: Lee Garbutt

It is not completely unusual for development of a game to switch platforms. Sometimes a development team's ambitions are not matched by the hardware and other times it's simply a business decision. Ubisoft's Rayman holds the distinction of shifting development to multiple platforms, making for an interesting tale. Hitting the Atari Jaguar, Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn and Windows platforms in 1995, the original game was a 2D platformer in a marketplace that insisted that 3D polygonal graphics were the future. But, thanks to a colourful, cartoon-like visual style and some excellent platforming mechanics, it set itself apart from the cavalcade of zany platform also-rans that found their way onto the 32-bit systems. Michel Ancel's limbless creation oozed with character and Gallic charm, and it's no surprise to see that the game's protagonist had much to do with its development. It was around the time of the development cycle of Rayman Origins, where a heap of truths about the first Rayman's origins, were unearthed. The most visual of these are three tiny screenshots published in Issue #13 of French publication Pix'N'Love, allegedly from an unfinished SNES version of the game. These static screens show two Rayman on screen at once, indicating that co-operative gameplay may have been on the cards at one point, although the reasons for its removal are unclear. As told to us by Michaël Guarné, author of "L'Histoire de Rayman" in this coop mode players would use Rayman and a female character. As far as the original story is concerned Rayman was an electronic character created by professor Hendrix for his nephew Jimmy. A storm was supposed to happen and a

lightning would strike Jimmy's house, transforming him to Rayman through an AC power socket (hence the circle on his sweat shirt). As for what did carry over to the final versions of the game, you can clearly see that the fantasy environments are a constant, even from these early screens. These areas, inspired by works of Chinese, Celtic and Russian fairy tales, may not be able to compete with the 32-bit versions' visuals, but they are colourful and would have made for one of the better looking platform games on the system. As for Rayman himself, creator Michel Ancel is clearly fond of the character he started working on as a teenager. In an interview with Retro Gamer magazine (Issue 90, May 2011), he outlines the reason for the titular character's unique anatomy: "When I was trying to get a handle on animation, I realised how hard it is to move arms and legs convincingly...Since my imagination is always getting ahead of my ideas, I had to stick with what I could humbly get away with... Sometimes accidents like that make for the happiest results. After all, he wouldn't have a wicked extendable punch and a 'hairlycopter', among other skills, if he had limbs like any other hero". It's worth mentioning that the game was originally envisioned for the Atari ST (a solo project, with Ancel also producing the art, sound, programming and animation), even before the SNES was eyed up as a platform. Working with Frédéric Houde, development was then moved to the SNES' supposed optical disc add-on (itself, an item worthy of the Unseen64 treatment). By the time Nintendo's partnership with Sony imploded, sealing the fate of the CD addon (and changing the course of videogame history, which is another story for another time), the two-man teams efforts were far too grandiose for the standalone 16-bit system to handle. Besides, the 32/64-bit generation was on the horizon and Atari's ill-fated Jaguar console would be the next target - albeit as a potential much-needed exclusive for the system. Ancel and his team were impressed by the system's power and cartridge storage capacity, and development was moved once more, only this time, Rayman would finally see a release. It would be regarded as one of the best games on the system, although the system quickly faded into obscurity. Ports for PlayStation, Saturn and PC improved on the Jaguar original, due to the added power and increased storage thanks to optical media. Even with 3D platformers ruling the roost on these systems, players were drawn to the stunning art direction that took the world that Ancel and his team created, and really brought it to life. After dabbling in the 3D polygonal space later on in two numbered sequels and a mountain of spinoffs, that very same 2D cartoon approach astounded gamers of all generations in 2011, as Rayman Origins once again relied on exceptional 2D visuals, married with spot-on platforming gameplay. As for what the two main minds behind Rayman are up to these days (at the time of writing): Frédéric Houde continues to work as the GPP director of Ubisoft Montpellier. Meanwhile, as the world holds its breath waiting for a sequel to the critically-acclaimed, cult classic Beyond Good & Evil, Michel Ancel and his team at the independent Wild Sheep Studios have been working on WiLD, a PlayStation 4-exclusive title that promises an open world adventure in an environment the size of Europe.

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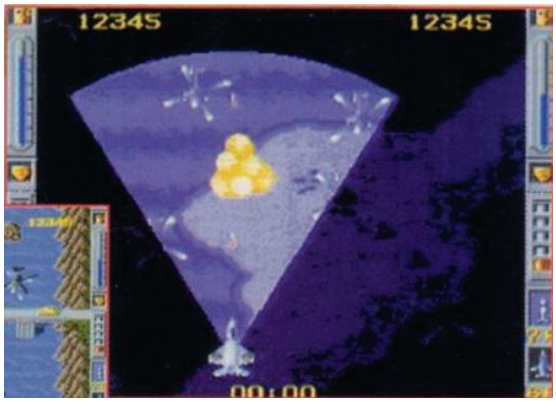
RIVER RAID



Article by: Matt Soulia

As most in the gaming community know, the Atari 2600 was a pioneer in many ways. Being one of the first home video game consoles on the market, the 2600 presented the world with many games that would pave the way to the gaming industry we know today. Games like Pong, Pitfall, and many other classics made it possible for games like Call of Duty and Halo to exist today. In 1982, Atari released one of these gaming pioneers with River Raid. Published by Activision, River Raid was a top down, scrolling shooter where the player controlled a jet and took down enemies while flying over "The River of No Return". It was this play style that would later appear in games such as 1942 and R-Type, games that are considered arcade classics. In 1991, River Raid would again pop up under the gaming radar. Shown alongside another game, Kaboom, at the 1991 Consumer Electronics Show, River Raid: The Mission of No Return was to be made for the Super Nintendo, and was the sequel many fans were waiting for. Much like it's predecessor, River Raid for the SNES was to be a top down shooter, based on images for the game that were shown in gaming magazines such as Banzai, Super Power, and VideoGames Magazine. Outside of these images, however, little else would ever be known about River Raid, as both it and Kaboom would later be canceled by Activision, with the developers claiming that neither game was capable of pushing the boundaries of the SNES hardware. Many would think that the story of River Raid SNES would end there, but many years later, a new chapter of this fabled game would be written. In 2001, a user on the forums of the AtariAge website with the username Klove claimed to be in possession of both the River Raid and Kaboom SNES prototypes. Many on the forum asked if he would be able to dump the ROMs on the site, or even post images of the prototypes. Klove turned down these request, claiming that it was a matter of his "legal department not allowing it." Many of the users on the forum started to question the validity of these claims because of this, with some users even claiming it was a "hoax", due to images of the game being released many years earlier in magazines. While it is not known if this is indeed the case, Klove, whose real name is Ken Love, was a former employee of Activision at the time, and it is very likely that his claims are true, considering Activision could very well not have wanted the material released at the time. Unfortunately, since Ken Love's departure from Activision, the trail of River Raid has since gone cold, leaving mystery and speculation in its wake. River Raid: The Mission of No Return, a game that could have continued the legacy of an amazing Atari game of the past, is now nothing more than a memory of what could have been.

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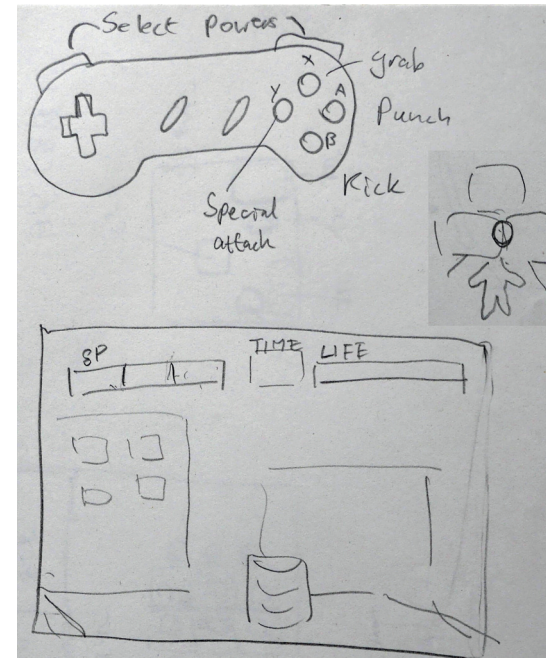
SATELLITE MAN

Article by: Tristan Avery

Satellite Man was a scrapped, albeit completely finished, game for the SNES by Japanese developer T&E Soft. The game was a comedic side-scrolling brawler akin to Final Fight that featured Satellite Man, a superhero who could harness the power of satellites, as he attempted to make his way to the moon to save it from an evil mastermind who claimed it for himself. Details of the game are scarce as few people have seen it and it is

unlikely that any of it remains to this day, but descriptions of the game by its developers reveal that the game had an absurd sense of humor, such as the fact that the titular hero is broke and has to hitch a ride to the moon on a NASA rocket ship. The game's bosses reflected this comedic style as well with “Baron Engine”, a man with a v8 engine for a body who chased the player around in a child's toy car, a bee who carried explosives appropriately named “Dynamite Bee” and “Captain Go”, an Apollo Lunar Module with a dangling body and a face of a man from T&E's sales department. Unlike some of the other side-scrolling fighters at the time Satellite Man was single player only and had a button for punches, kicks, grabs and special attacks. There were three special attacks, two of which were the ability to shoot down a damaging beam from a satellite and the ability to create two shadow versions of yourself to help fight. These special moves were unlocked by filling a recharging “satellite bar” and the player could use three special attacks in a row if the bar was fully charged. In an attempt to make the game seem more like an American comic book the developers added text bubbles like “BOOM” and “POW” that would pop up when enemies were hit. Despite being 100% finished after half a year of development the game never saw the light of day. This was mostly due to the fact that one of the developers handed a copy of the game to company co-founder Eiji Yokoyama and promised him he would laugh every 30 seconds, to which Yokoyama responded by not laughing once throughout the entire game. The developers also chalk it up to the fact that T&E had recently released Rise of the Robots, a critical and financial failure that is lauded as one of the worst fighting games of all time, and didn't think they could sell another fighting game so soon afterwards. As many other lost SNES games, nothing remain from Satellite Man, only a sketch and a few memories in an interview by John Szczepaniak with former T&E Soft developers.



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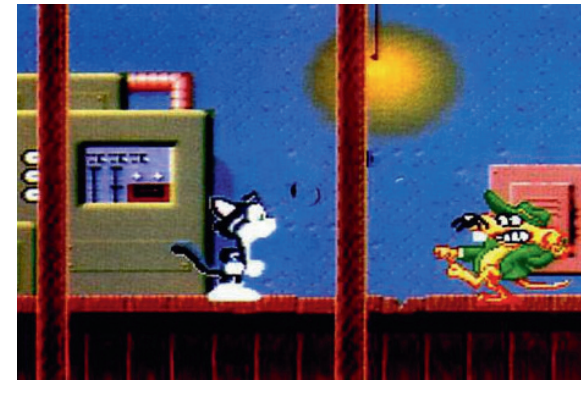
SOCKS THE CAT ROCKS THE HILL

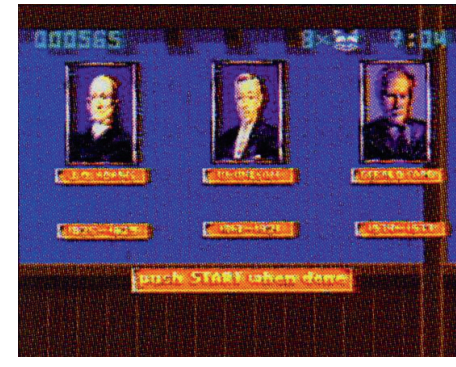
Article by: Evan Gowan



Socks the Cat Rocks the Hill is one of the most sought after unreleased SNES games after Star Fox 2 was leaked online. The game was one of many licensed platformers set to be released for the SNES, but its concept has captured the imagination of SNES fans everywhere. Socks the Cat Rocks the Hill was one of two games planned by Kaneko USA featuring the Socks the Cat license. A Genesis game, Socks Rocks the Hill, was going to be a completely different game, not a port, and is also unreleased. The Socks the Cat license was not actually owned by the Clinton administration - rather a not-for-profit fan club based in Arlington, Virginia, known as Presidential Socks Partnership, Inc., controlled this license. The fan club was run by Robert Platt and Jay Wind, and their website on Geocities still exists in archives. In exchange for use of the license, Kaneko donated money to charity. The June 20, 1993 issue of the Chicago Tribune gave the details of this agreement: “Then there is Socks, barely out of his first 100 days as First Cat and already starring in two video games-one from Sega and another from Nintendo - as well as appearing as a plush toy and a logo for coffee mugs and key chains. How does anybody go about securing licensing rights to Chelsea Clinton's personal cat? The

answer is, by law, Socks is nobody's personal cat. His image belongs to the person who copyrights it first, and Bob Pratt, of Presidential Socks Partnership, won the race, along with the right to license his image. Though he didn't have to do it, Pratt has promised a share of his profits to the Humane Society and the Children's Defense Fund, which happens to be one of Hillary Rodham Clinton's favorite charities. Socks himself didn't even get a bag of catnip out of the deal." Even back when it was announced, this game was a curiosity, if not scoffed at for its unusual concept. Though at the time of its announcement, Socks was a big deal, and even when I was a kid, I remember the celebrity position that Socks had. The game was developed by Realtime Associates, who developed a number of games during the 16-bit era, such as Aaaaah! Real Monsters and Beavis & Butt-head: The Game. Being an upstart video game company, Kaneko quickly latched onto big name licenses to survive in the crowded 16-bit platforming market. The only two games that came out using this strategy carried the Chester Cheetah license, though they had plans to release games based on Fido Dido (the mascot for 7-Up) and Socks the Cat. In the June 1993 issue of Playthings magazine, there is a feature piece on Kaneko's products, and they clearly thought they had a winner in these licenses. Socks mania was in full force, and there was a big demand for anything Socks related. Given the popularity of the 16-bit systems was ramping up by the middle of 1993, it was a logical choice to create a video game. "Without raising a whisker, "Socks the Cat" has settled into his new White House home and created "Socksmania" across the country. In less than four months of the new administration, the White House cat has gained national attention by appearing on numerous episodes of "Entertainment Tonight" and in newspaper and magazine articles including Time Magazine and The Wall Street Journal. Socks the Cat was the hit of the recent International Toy Fair in New York City and now graces everything from his own plush doll likeness to T-Shirts, bumper stickers, and of course, socks. In his video game debut, entitled "Socks Rocks the House", he will venture from the basement of the White House to the Oval Office to create havoc with the President's allergies. Along the way, while the cat's at play, Socks must push Millie the dog out the front door as well as avoid Arab terrorist felines." The Playthings article gives an early working title of the game (Socks the Cat Rocks the House), as well as an initial release date of fourth quarter 1993. A later blurb from the June 15 1993 issue of US Today narrowed the release to January 1994 (and the Genesis game to November 1993). "CRUSADER CAT: At least one member of the Clinton clan is as popular today as he was upon entering the White House. Socks has shown up on T-shirts, mugs, stationery. Next up? Socks Rocks the House, a video game from Surge Entertainment in which the four-footed furball searches for an ex-KGB agent intent on detonating the Rush Lim-Bomb and destroying Washington, D.C. The $49.95, 16-bit video game from licensee Kaneko USA, Ltd., will be out in November for use on the Sega Genesis Entertainment System; Socks Rocks the Hill, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System 16-bit format, is due in January." I tried to find information on Surge Entertainment, but I came up empty. I think it must have been an error. Back before E3 became the dominant trade show for video games, CES was the primary place for developers to show off new games. At the Summer CES held on June 1993 in Chicago, Kaneko showed off their games based on Chester Cheetah, Fido Dido and Socks the Cat. They held a cocktail party event to unveil the games on June 2nd. Needless to say, Socks the Cat stood out among all of the games shown at the CES. From the June 18, 1993 issue of the Chicago Tribune's overview of the games shown at the CES: "Most Politically Correct Software: Socks the Cat Rocks the House (Kaneko) puts you in the role of the First Cat, escaping "from the basement to the Oval Office to create havoc with the president's allergies." I am not making this up."

Kaneko did intend to push for the release to be in the fourth quarter. It is mentioned in the September 1993 issue of Gamepro that it would be released in January 1994 (probably reiterating what was said at CES). A full



page advertisement of the game appeared in the November and January 1993 issues of Gamepro. The ad says the game should have been available in Fall 1993. “[...] Socks, the White House cat, discovers the missing portable nuclear launch unit in his favorite napping spot, the basement of a foreign embassy. To avoid mass destruction, he must return to the White House and alert the first family. But, a foreign spy ring has their own political agenda. They want to see Socks run, and not for political office! The chase begins. Socks must overcome the likes of foreign spies, Enemy Animal Agents, politicians, secret service agents and the ever-present media corp. To keep the party alive, Socks pounces, tumbles, and negotiates his way out of the intricate secret passages and puzzles of Washington. [...] Clearly, the game did not meet its original deadline. Nintendo Power had a short preview in the May 1994 issue. In it, they state that the content might be considered a bit controversial, but that enemies were quite comical. Reviews for Socks the Cat started to appear in magazines between June and July 1994, indicating the game was reaching completion. Socks the Cat was considered an above average platformer with some imaginative enemies based on political figures. As a bit of a political junkie, I probably would have enjoyed this cute game. The Ross Perot boss seems to have really impressed the reviewers. The Nintendo Power review mentions that the game can be challenging due to poor control, though confusingly the Gamepro review gives it a "beginner" challenge rating. Alas, the game was not to be. Kaneko closed its doors shortly before the release of the game. Though the game was reviewed, the former Kaneko employees I contacted say it was not complete. There has been speculation on the Internet that this game met its end because of Nintendo's censorship policies, but this was not the case. I asked Ellen Fuog, former VP of marketing for Kaneko USA about this: “Socks absolutely did not fall victim to any Nintendo censorship policies. Quite the contrary, they liked the idea; they liked the game. Everyone did. Most unfortunately, Kaneko did, indeed, shut down its US office around that time (summer 1994).” Jeff Hill, the former director of product development at Kaneko, says the game was nowhere near completion: “Socks the Cat pretty much headed straight for the litterbox. The game barely got off the drawing board and never got close to being a finished product. All we had at the time development was canceled was part of its first level. Discontinuation of its development had nothing to do with censorship. The game had a long, long way to go and Kaneko closed its US office in July of ’94.”

However, Anne McDonald, who worked on the game at Realtime Associates, says the game was complete. I also asked David Warhol, the owner of Realtime Associates: “Yes, we developed and completed Socks Rocks the Hill for SNES. The Genesis version was done by another studio and was called "Socks Rocks the House". I'll tell you this - it was VERY irreverent. The level bosses were main political figures of the time in situations that parodied their political lives. All I remember is that we had Nixon calling in bomb raids and we had Ted Kennedy driving a car around on a bridge. Maybe it's better it didn't come out after all!” So, the developer of Socks the Cat says the game was complete and ready for release. The fact that box art was ready for this game also suggests it was close to production. Not all is lost as a playable prototype of Socks the Cat Rocks the Hill exists. There’s a video available on Youtube that supports the assertion by Realtime Associates that the game was near or at completion. The graphics in the level are the same two of the screenshots available from the reviews of the game. Socks the Cat Rocks the Hill probably would have been lost in the sea of 16-Bit platforming games had it been released in 1994. However, its unique political concept has given it an air of legendary mystique amongst SNES fans and remains one of the most weird lost games we’ll never play (maybe?).

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SPINNY AND SPIKE

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Spinny & Spike is a Sega Genesis action title that was in development at Sega Technical Institute, the western studio responsible for productions such as Sonic Spinball and Kid Chameleon, in the early '90s. Never officially announced, the game was first mentioned in a 2004 sonicdatabase.com interview with ex-STI artist Tom Payne, who described it as a title whose stages were inspired by a kid's nightmares; for example, the first level, set inside a mouth, represented a terrifying visit to the dentist. In 2006, Chris Seen, another ex-STI artist, posted on the Senntient Forum the source graphics of two bosses, Snake and Junkyard Dog, as well as the hotdogs and bouncing dog-heads that populated the latter's stage. He also described their in-game behaviour: In the Snake fight, the player had, initially, to shoot him while avoiding being bitten; after enough hits, the reptile revealed his robotic body and became more dangerous, flying across the screen and launching missiles, his most vulnerable part being his eyes. In the first phase of the Junkyard Dog battle we had, instead, to evade his bites and shoot the nose; it was only after a few hits that his real weak spot, the skull, was then exposed.
In an April 2007 interview with Sega-16, Chris Seen also reported that the game featured two main characters, presumably called Spinny and Spike. Finally, in June 2007, Sega-16 was able to talk extensively with one of the original creators, Steve Woita, fully revealing the troubled story behind this title, which according to him consisted, just like Alien Soldier, mainly of boss battles. The Spinny & Spike project was approved by Tom Kalinske roughly at the same time (1992) as the prototype that eventually became Comix Zone. However, after a few months, he and the other two key people that were working on the game (Jason Plumb and Tom Payne), were moved to the team that was developing Sonic Spinball, which needed more manpower in order to be ready for 1993 holiday season. Unfortunately, during their absence, Sega decided to hire a new producer, lead artist and a few more staff (including Chris Seen), in order to take the project in a novel direction. Woita and Plum disliked this decision, fearing that they would have less creative control over the game.

After getting a good offer from Ocean, they thus resolved to leave Sega for good. The latter initially tried to restart the development without them, but their coding was deemed too unconventional and consequently it would have forced the newly hired programmers to start completely anew. This was too expensive for Sega, which thus decided to cancel the project. Only two levels (the Snake and the Junkyard ones) were reportedly completed. After shelving Spinny & Spike, STI went to release in 1995 their two final games, Comix Zone and The Ooze. Aside from the infamous Sonic X-treme, during their existence Sega Technical Institute also worked on other cancelled productions such as B-Bomb, an action title where players had to fight enemies using their characters' butts, and the completely unknown, even if apparently almost finished, Jester, which, according to Sega-16, was "an adventure featuring a clay character that was able to survive even the most deadly attacks".

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STARFOX 2

Article by: Evan Gowan

Star Fox 2 (or StarFox 2), one of the most anticipated games late in the life cycle of the SNES, was quietly cancelled by Nintendo in late 1995 with the impending release of the Nintendo 64. In 2002, a near-final beta prototype of the game was leaked on the Internet by an anonymous former employee, and has become the most well known unreleased game for any system. By the middle of 1995, it was apparent that despite favourable reviews at the Winter 1995 CES, Nintendo was hesitant to release Star Fox 2 against the superior looking Saturn and PlayStation. The impending launch of the Nintendo 64 also played a part in its cancellation, with Nintendo wanting a clear break between Super FX 3D and N64 3D. Although Nintendo claimed it would be released in the September 1995 issue of Nintendo Power, it was swept under the rug along with other Super FX games like Comanche and FX Fighter. Despite its cancellation, Star Fox 2 remains a highly revered game for its excellent gameplay and intriguing history. The development of Star Fox 2 began almost immediately after the original was finished. I gained access to some source code of an early version of Star Fox 2, and a comment with it states that began development on February 16, 1993. This was a mere five days before the Japanese release of the original game. The first mention in the press seems to be from the January 1994 issue of Game Players, stating the game would feature split screen multiplayer and use the Super FX2 chip. The first public display of Star Fox 2 by Nintendo was at the 1995 Winter CES in Las Vegas. With the delay of the then "Ultra 64", Nintendo decided to push several Super FX games (Star Fox 2, FX Fighter, Comanche, all of which were eventually cancelled) along with the unveiling of the Virtual Boy to keep attention focused their way. Rumours began as early as April 1995 that the game had been delayed until 1996 so that it did not clash with the release of the Nintendo 64 and Virtual Boy (or even that the game had to be retooled - though this certainly was not true). The game was not shown at the inaugural E3 in May 1995. Instead, Nintendo showed off the final version of the Ultra 64 hardware, along with the Virtual Boy and Donkey Kong Country 2. In the letters section of the September issue of EGM (presumably published in August), the editor wrote that Star Fox 2 was cancelled. In the September 1995 issue of Nintendo Power, they countered that claim stating: "Rumors of the demise of Star Fox 2 have been greatly exaggerated. Development of Nintendo's sequel to the hit 3-D space action game is finishing as we go to press. The big question mark is the release date, most likely in the first half of '96. The most recent versions of Star Fox 2 look very sharp and include a much more strategic feel, with radar windows and mother ships where you dock after battle." That was the last official word we heard about Star Fox 2 for the SNES. In early 1996, Nintendo showed off what would become Star Fox 64 on the Nintendo 64, putting the final nail in Star Fox 2's coffin. Though there are claims that the high cost of producing Super FX games may have led to the delay and cancellation of the game, it seems that the main reason was that Nintendo felt it was going to be released too close to the release of the Nintendo 64. This is a

quote from programmer Dylan Cuthbert from the defunct website emulatorium.com: "What happened to Star Fox 2? Why was it cancelled and how far into development was it? How is it, if at all, related to Star Fox 64? Star Fox 2 was fully completed. I was lead programmer and whilst Giles made Stunt Race FX, myself and the rest of the original Star Fox team (i.e.. Nintendo's artists and designers) expanded Star Fox into a full 3d shooting game. We used state-of-the-art technology such as arbitrary plane clipping (which has only been seen recently in such games as Crash Bandicoot 2 & 3) to create some rather spectacular effects (for the time). The reason for non-release was the then impending Nintendo 64, which of course was intended to be released a lot sooner than it actually was. Miyamoto-san decided he wanted to have a clean break between 3D games on the SNES and 3D games on the new superior 64 bit system. In retrospect, he could have released Star Fox 2 and there would have been over a year and a half before the N64 came out. But hindsight is always 20/20. Star Fox 64 incorporated a lot of the newer ideas we created in Star Fox 2 but it didn't, in my view, take the genre a full step forward. Star Fox 2 really was a different direction of gameplay." From the timing of the statement in Nintendo, it appears that Star Fox 2 was completed in Summer 1995 (the "final" beta that was leaked has a time stamp of June 22, 1995 inside the test mode menu). Although the impending release of the Nintendo 64 factored into the decision to cancel the game, it's possible that the impressive release of the PlayStation also factored into it. Despite sporting excellent gameplay that outshone most Saturn and PlayStation games released in 1995, the graphics were definitely not impressive in comparison. In an interview with Nintendo Life in December 2015, Dylan Cuthbert stated that the game was 95% complete when it was officially cancelled, but Nintendo allowed the developers to complete it. It went through the full Nintendo quality control like any released title. At this point, there are two known leaked prototypes of Star Fox 2: an early alpha and a near-final beta. There are plenty of mentions about a third, even earlier alpha. However after analysis, this turned out to be a demo of the Game Boy game, X. In addition, there are three other versions of the game were shown to the media: one was from a preview in the February 1995 issue of Nintendo Power, another was shown in the March 1995 issue of Super Game Power (essentially the Brazllian version of Gamepro), and the last was a version shown at the 1995 Winter CES. Though Star Fox 2 did not come out, it did influence subsequent Nintendo games. Miyamoto stated many of the ideas and technology for the 3D environment from Super Mario 64 came during the development of Star Fox (and probably Star Fox 2 as well). Miyamoto claimed about 30% of the ideas in Star Fox 64 came from Star Fox 2 (in all likelihood referring to the all-range mode battles, Star Wolf team and the tank levels). Dylan Cuthbert stated the strategic elements from Star Fox Command for the DS were inspired by Star Fox 2. A

completed version of this game exists in Nintendo's vaults. Apparently legal complications prevent Nintendo from releasing Super FX games on their Virtual Console system (certainly Argonaut was not pleased with Star Fox 2 getting cancelled, and therefore cutting them off from royalties). We can only hope that some day this can be resolved, and we can play the final version of one of the greatest games never commercially released.

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SUPER QUICK

Article by: Roberto Tunon

The early nineties are still fondly recalled for its myriad mascot-based 2D platformers. Besides Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog, a bunch of different cartoon-like characters such as Bubsy the Bobcat, Zool or Cool Spot - generally sporting different grades of cool and corny attitudes - enjoyed varying levels of success and longevity in the years to come. French software publisher Titus Interactive tried its luck in the genre with own produced side-scrolling games such as Prehistorik, hitting the Amiga, Atari ST and Amstrad CPC computers, or the so called Titus the Fox, which besides launching on the aforementioned systems, would also make the leap to handheld consoles Game Boy and GB Color. Likewise, Prehistorik received a sequel that was released first on the Super Nintendo, and much later on the Game Boy Advance (as well as on the Nintendo DSi download service). It was clear that mascot-based platformers were a safe bet, and many developers ventured into the creation of its own cast of colourful games and characters to compete in an increasingly busy market. Such was the case of Stywox; a small team based in Enghien-les-Bains, near Paris, responsible for the Amiga title Quick the Thunder Rabbit. The game was a combination of most, if not all, the traditional ingredients of 2D mascot platformers starting from its main character Quick, a blue rabbit of cheerful expressions - reaching certain levels of creepiness in some of the game's animated sequences - embarking on a journey to recover the village's stolen carrot hoard. Speed and momentum played an important role in Quick the Thunder Rabbit's levels, and not only because of the swift movements of its main character. This was also because together with the usual time limit many side-scrollers presented, Quick also needed food and drink, indicated at all times by two menacing bars that slowly depleted, unless the player kept grabbing the carrots and water bottles that the numerous enemies dropped upon defeat. Quick the Thunder Rabbit also enjoyed a port to DOS and Amiga CD32, with the second one being the ultimate version of the game and exhibiting a slightly more polished graphical look, evident for example in its richer backgrounds. The icing on the cake on both ports, however, was the addition of an absurdly hilarious intro cutscene that narrates how our intrepid rabbit comes into play and even dares to mock Sonic the Hedgehog himself! Plans for Quick did not stop there: between 1993 and 1994

Titus and Stywox started production of another entry in the franchise that went under the - most probably provisional - name of Super Quick and was targeted at the Super Nintendo, a system that after having reached its maturity, amassed a well-established user base. Super Quick constituted a new game rather than being just a port of the Amiga title. From the few screenshots available, it is clear that both the chosen graphical style and the gameplay itself took a different direction. For starters, graphics this time left aside part of the colourful palette of the original game, and instead presented a darker and less cartoony feel, with more volume and depth given to both backgrounds and characters. When it came to the gameplay, developers went for a more varied approach and to side-scrolling, shoot 'em up and even one-on-one fighting sections were being added. In the latter ones, the clear parody spirit of Quick the Thunder Rabbit became even more prevalent due to presenting a boss fight that "was like a spoof of Cell from Dragon Ball Z", as described by one of the game's developers. Although not confirmed, it also seems very likely that Stywox had decided to completely drop the overly complex food and drink system from the original, as the existing screenshots show a more straightforward HUD that supposedly would have gone for a more classical concept of item recollection. Super Quick's developer team consisted of in-house employees from Stywox plus a small number of freelancers. They were overall an extremely young group, and for some of them this was their first real-world experience in video game development. Despite the limited information that is accessible, it is clear that the team worked on the game for around five months before cancellation took place and although reasons are not clear, it all points out to a mixture between the fact that the SNES was reaching the end of its life cycle, and a lack of middle-term project planning to re-target the game to a newer system. Stywox's situation became uncertain and after cancellation of Super Quick, there was an attempt to develop a second project called Crazy Punch, in which the same development team started working after having found new investors. Sadly, this new game would once again be cancelled after just two weeks, meaning the definite bankruptcy and disappearance of Stywox. Some of the original game's developers and members of the defunct Stywox kept working in the video game industry. Among them, Bruno Gore, art director of Quick the Thunder Rabbit, who made a prolific career as graphic and character designer, and participated in recent games such as Breach, Red Faction: Armaggedon and Guerrilla, while also being a part of the productions design and Illustration studio Massive Black, based in San Francisco. Frédéric Paris, another of the original game's graphics artists, joined the studio Coktel Vision, another French video game developer and subsidiary of Mindscape. After parting ways from Coktel, Frédéric continued his career as lead artist and eventually became artistic director, first for Vivendi and afterwards for Bulkypix, a French company founded by former Vivendi employees.

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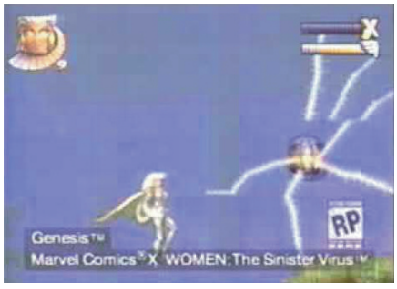
X-WOMEN: THE SINISTER VIRUS

Article by: Jesse Cook

X-Women: The Sinister Virus was intended to be the concluding title in the popular Sega Genesis series of X-Men games, following X-Men (1993) and X-Men 2: Clone Wars (1995). The previous titles in the series were developed by Western Technologies Inc. and Headgames respectively, but X-Women was in development at Clockwork Tortoise Studios, the creators of the highly praised The Adventures of Batman and Robin. While previous games in the series focused more on the men of X-Men, X-Women - as the title entails - was wholly dedicated to the ladies of Xavier's academy. There is virtually no information available regarding any narrative aspects of the game, except for the title. The plot may have centered on the Legacy virus that was introduced to Marvel comics in 1993, but there is nothing besides the fact that the game was in development during the time the virus was affecting characters in the Marvel universe. The only confirmed characters in the game were Storm, Jean Grey, and Rogue; though there is speculation that other female mutants such as Jubilee, Psylocke, Dazzler, and Shadowcat would also be featured. From the incredibly sparse footage available for the game (the only video available features 24 seconds of footage showcasing Rogue, Jean, and Storm battling spherical and humanoid robots in various indiscernible locales), it appears that X-Women would have followed the gameplay style of the previous titles in the series, which utilized sidescrolling action/platformer elements. However, the developers were also working to include a flying mechanic to set the series apart from its predecessors along with many other action titles of the time. John Pedigo, an associate producer at Sega of America during the 1990s, explained in an interview with Sega-16 that "[the team] tried to . . . add flying to the Batman mechanic" as well as include more ranged abilities: "Storm was going to have lightning attacks, Jean was able to grab hold of things and throw them, and Rogue would've just beat the crap out of everything" (Dan Rimerez, Sega-16). Based on the pedigree of the series and the development team involved, there appears to have been a lot of interest in the game, though there is very little content to support this opinion besides a few early, brief articles in magazines such as Electronic Gaming Monthly and the aforementioned promotional video. Unfortunately, the game never made it very far into development before it was cancelled. In this case, it appears that Clockwork Tortoise was its own worst enemy in regards to development of the title. In another interview with Sega-16, former Clockwork Tortoise artist Chris George revealed that "Clockwork Tortoise was the victim of itself. The guys who started the company were extremely talented and capable, but were lacking organization. After a couple of years of working all-nighters, the lead programmer decided he was done and moved back to Ireland to start a coffee house" (Ken Horowitz, Sega-16). John Pedigo admits in his interview that he and the staff at Clockwork Tortoise became too friendly, "[We] were going to raves and partying together outside of work, and I lost my status as the client. And when s**t hit the fan, I got no response on my threats. I got a lot of interference from my main programmer's (John O' Brien) wife... I think the pressure of following up the Batman title was too much for the guy, and they never hit one milestone" (Dan Rimerez Sega-16). George echoes this in his interview, pointing to the lead producer's (unnamed) frequent refusal to continue work on projects if Sega



refused payment based on the fact that Clockwork Tortoise did not meet expected milestones: "The lead producer at Clockwork Tortoise had this talent for turning our shortcomings back around on Sega… we always got the checks and almost never delivered a proper milestone. The industry certainly doesn't function in this manner anymore" (Ken Horowitz, Sega-16). Along with this, X-Women also seems to be a victim of poor timing, as it was essentially slated to be one of the last games, if not the last game, coming out for the dated Sega Genesis. With much of the industry preparing for the arrival of the next wave of video game consoles like the Sony Playstation and the Nintendo 64, there was very little chance for X-Women to be picked up once Clockwork Tortoise abandoned the project in late 1996. Early the following year, Clockwork Tortoise dissolved and the various employees moved on to individual careers. John O'Brien returned to Ireland to open a coffee shop, and John Pedigo moved into HTML coding before going back to games as a freelance artist and programmer. Chris George continued his career in game art and design, and has most recently worked on several of the Guitar Hero titles as well as 2006's Gun with Neversoft Studios.

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Sega 32X, Mega CD

Article by: Damiano Bacci (Blek)

The Sega CD (known as Mega CD outside North America) and the Sega 32X are the two infamous add-ons for the Sega Genesis (Mega Drive outside North America). The first was meant to extend the lifespan of Sega's 16-bit console, allowing it to compete with the "newly" released Super Nintendo, while the second was only a patch in a market that was waiting for the Saturn and Playstation release. The "infamous" label is rapidly explained: both were commercial failures with a library composed mostly of unappealing games, known for their poor and rushed development. Of course there were some bright spots with a bunch of great games, but the general consensus toward the add-ons remains negative. The Sega CD was developed as a CD add-on of the Genesis, much alike the TurboGrafx-CD for the TurboGrafx-16, however the Sega CD was more of a complete console, featuring the same CPU as the Genesis and its own power adapter. This extra hardware skyrocketed the production costs and reflected directly on the launch price, set at 299$ for the American market (much more than a regular Genesis). Launched in December 1991 in Japan and October 1992 in North America, despite the high price, the system was well received at launch: it was advertised with all the benefits of the disc-based games, like additional storage space for FMV videos, high quality audio and graphics. However, being a mere add-on ultimately doomed the system. The Sega CD not only failed to conquer a significant market share, but it divided the Genesis' one. Very few quality games were made, and the most famous ones, either were very good (like Sonic The Hedgehog CD or Lunar: Eternal Blue) or were known more for their bad quality, cheesy cutscenes and B-movie feeling (pretty much all the FMV titles like Corpse Killer, Sewer Shark and the infamous Night Trap, with the shower scene controversy). Sega's image didn't look very good in the end: the Sega CD was discontinued in late 1993, showing the poor support that Sega put in the console, leaving consumers on their own with a pitiful library of games (also lacking support for third party developers). The 32X added misery to all this: designed merely as a stop-gap during the Saturn's waiting, it boasted the image of Sega as a company with terrible and insecure marketing choices. Launched at the end of 1994 and discontinued in early 1996, the system was plagued with technical complexity and it came just before the launch of the Saturn and the Playstation. The developers literally flew off from the system, which failed commercially on a worldwide level. Only forty games were released, and a few of them were ports of the Genesis version (there were even some exclusive Sega CD + 32X games, that required both add-ons). A Genesis+32X standalone version called the Sega Neptune was planned to release in fall 1995, but it was cancelled after the discontinuation of the 32X. The Sega CD ended up selling 2.24 million units worldwide, while the 32X managed only 665,000 units. Unfortunately, these two consoles provided blueprints for the Saturn and the Dreamcast, marking the beginning of Sega's decline on the world stage of video game manufacturers. We probably don't have to mention that many titles planned for these add-ons were soon canned when it was clear that the market was not interested and it was better to just invest time and money into 32-bit consoles. In the following list of cancelled Sega CD and 32X games we will explore a few ambitious projects such as the first attempt to create a 3D Sonic game, and weird interactive experiments with '90s music artists.

SEGA 32X MEGA CD

CASTLEVANIA: THE BLOODLETTING

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Castlevania: The Bloodletting is a cancelled game for the Sega 32X, the ill-fated add-on for the Sega Genesis / Megadrive. It was being developed by Konami and was planned to be released around 1996, but because of low sales of the 32X peripheral, the game was canned and later reworked into cult-classic Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, finally released for Playstation and Sega Saturn in 1997. The game was first announced in the December 1994 issue of Game Players Magazine, revealing just a few snippets of info about this sequel for Konami's popular series. Castlevania: The Bloodletting would have had similar gameplay to its predecessors and would have taken place chronologically after the 1994's Castlevania: Rondo of Blood. Players would have to complete levels one after another, with just some elements of the more open-ended "Metroidvania" exploration that would eventually be implemented in Symphony of the Night. In true Castlevania tradition, these levels would take place in different areas of the castle, filled with classic horror creatures, as well as terrifying bosses and of course, Dracula himself. The game would have starred Richard Belmont, Maria Renard and an anonymous antagonistic character known only as "The Rival" who is hoping to find and kill Dracula before Richard, just to trump him and receive all the fame and glory. It is believed that the game was cancelled due to the 32X being a risky investment, as the add-on was a commercial failure, causing Sega to focus on the Saturn console. Sony's Playstation also proved to be a much more powerful system to work on and Konami decided that the game should have been released on these new 32 bit consoles. The studio did not release any other game for Sega's 32X add-on after the cancellation of The Bloodletting. Koji Igarashi (AKA Kouji IGA, producer on many Castlevania games until 2014, when he left Konami to fund his own indie studio), spoke about The Bloodletting in an interview on 1UP.com for Castlevania's 20th Anniversary, in 2006: "We made an early playable version, but the game did not progress because our company's policy toward the hardware changed. Management decided to make the PlayStation our focus, so we made some drastic changes to our initial ideas and ended up with Symphony of the Night". Even if The Bloodletting was never released, fans created a PC game based on the 32X project, released for free under the same title, featuring Harker Belmont. The most recent official episode in the Castlevania series was Lords of Shadow 2, developed by MercurySteam and published in 2014 for PS3, Xbox 360 and PC. It's currently unknown if there will ever be another classic Castlevania game by Konami, but at least Igarashi is working on his own spiritual successor to the series he worked on, with a crowd-funded project titled "Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night".

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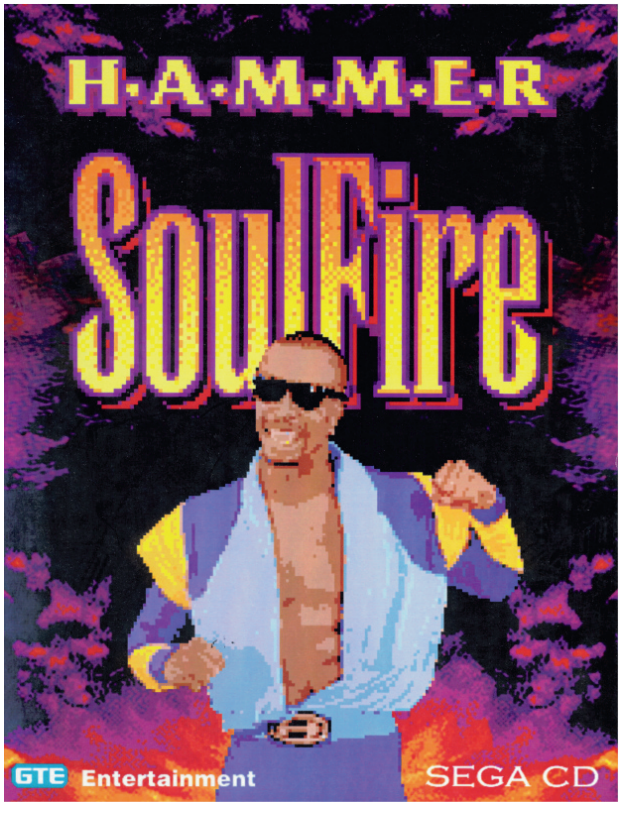
HAMMER VS. EVIL D. IN SOULFIRE

Article by: Tony Peters

"Hammer vs. Evil D. in Soulfire" is a canceled action game based on popular 1990s American rapper, MC Hammer. In development for the Mega / Sega CD add-on by GTE Entertainment, it was set to be published by Sega in 1994 before being quietly canceled. The game's complete existence disappeared from the world's collective memory before a short gameplay demo video (taken from a Sega compilation video made for the 1994 Winter Consumer Electronic Show) uploaded to YouTube in 2011 revived interest in the project. Unseen64 was fortunate enough to speak with the game's lead developer, Phil Sorger, about his time working on and designing the game. His memories of the process and working with MC Hammer shed light on what he

was aiming to create with the final product. In 1983, Sorger made the transition from robotics programming in the semiconductor test equipment industry to his first position in the video game industry as a Composer and Sound Designer for Cinematronics. He says that while he was already a pretty good assembly language programmer, he was completely blown away by the skill and speed of the coders and designers he called colleagues in this new position. Ten years and three companies later, Sorger found himself working for GTE - specifically, GTE ImagiTrek - helping with "Time Traveler," a game similar to one released by his previous employer titled "Dragon's Lair." One of his primary motivations for taking a job with GTE was his interest in online games. He rationalized the move by telling himself that there was much he could learn about the process of creating an online game simply by digging directly into the data pipes. ImagiTrek was a part of the developer's name because it captured the idea of using digital technology to expand horizons of entertainment. They weren't a big game studio, rather more akin to a digital studio, but there were millions of dollars of audio and video equipment, racks upon racks of gear, and one of the quietest audio rooms in the western United States. However, as with all successful companies, they needed to produce money-making content. This led to the creation of the aforementioned games, as well as work on point-of-sale (POS) terminals, MPEG-2 encoding algorithms and general digitizing services. During the early 1990s, Sega was looking for publishers and developers to create content for the Sega CD, and as such provided development equipment and documentation to eager developers. Simultaneously, the hottest trend in gaming was full motion video, a technology that ImagiTrek had the equipment, software and capability to produce content for. This was an opportunity. After completing work on what would become 1994's "Jammit! Street Basketball", Sorger was brought on board a project featuring rapper MC Hammer. Though the exact genesis of how a MC Hammer-based game became one of ImagiTrek's projects is not currently known, Sorger vaguely recalls a connection between the developer, its backers and Hammer's label ultimately leading to the game being green-lighted. Regardless of how it came about, production on the game was well underway by the time Sorger joined the project, with significant portions of storyboarding and design completed. Looking to further utilize and expand on the digitizing and rotoscoping animation skills that would soon draw industry praise to ImagiTrek, Sorger began his journey working with the Sega CD and learning what kind of game he could create. Having seen some of the full motion video games at the time, including "Sewer Shark" and "NFL's Greatest: San Francisco vs. Dallas", Sorger was left with a stomach full of disappointment. He wanted to see a quality title that combined the best of what full motion video and traditional spite animation had to offer. Starting work using the new C/C++ compiler for 68000 he had used when coding "Jammit!", Sorger found that shortcuts designed to code faster for Sega CD did not work as expected. He recalls addressing the quandary: "I remember looking at the assembly created by the compiler, going back to the



C/C++ code, adding in some parentheses, register statements, asterisks and whatnot and repeating the compile/examine/edit cycle until I got the exact assembly code that I wanted. Seemed totally worth it at the time. It was the only way to get all three processors talking to each other correctly and to get the DMA ping pong buffer algorithm working at the same time with no hiccups." Though it can be difficult to imagine now, pop culture during the early 1990s in America made it near impossible to not know who MC Hammer was. Thanks to his catchy songs, brightly colored parachute pants and signature dance moves - not to mention the simple fact that no other pop musician sounded anything like him - Hammer's 1990 album "Please Hammer, Don't Hurt 'Em" sold over 14.5 million copies worldwide in fewer than two years on the market. With the help of rapper Vanilla Ice's smash hit single "Ice Ice Baby", hip-hop was proving to be a far more valuable commodity than anticipated. Sorger remembers the time he spent working and interacting with Hammer quite vividly. His words had a profound effect not only on the young Sorger, but on the project itself. Initially though, the concept felt like an unexpected gust on a day with an awful wind chill. "This kind of stopped me cold. I wasn't really a fan of rap or hip-hop, still am not really. I prefer Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and other guitar-driven classic rock. But hey, Hammer's music is catchy and his videos stood apart from anything else at the time. No way was I prepared to meet the man himself." As the game was set to feature animation created from digitized film, Hammer - along with other actors and dancers - spent three days and thirty hours filming material for the game on a sound stage. The set itself was a huge soundstage with green floors covered with masking tape marking where actors should stand. White cycloramas that could be lit different colors and were

easily distinguished from people were used for walls and backdrops. Giant cameras mounted on mobile dollies, adorned with proportionate lens, whirred with cans of fat 32mm color film. Around twenty people, Sorger included, were involved in the shoot. He quipped that he, "had the least to do of all", as the majority of his work as Lead Developer would not begin until after the process of choreography, filming, digitizing, rotoscoping and file conversion had been completed. Having worked on some film projects in college at UC Davis, he mainly chipped in with roadie work by running cable and setting up equipment. On occasion during the shoot, he served as consultant on how the digitization process was progressing and if he thought what they had would work on the console and in sixteen colors. "Funny to think about it now," he reflects. Part of the process involved Polaroids taken as stills, mementos that Sorger now laments lacking the foresight to hold onto at the time. "I wish I would have grabbed a few of those. I know they were floating around the studio afterwards for years." A typical period of filming consisted of an hour of setup, fifteen minutes of blocking and fifteen minutes of filming with the talent before another hour was spent determining usefulness of the footage while Hammer and his entourage returned to his dressing room. The digitizing then happened overnight as a team using industrial desktop Macs with digitizing cards and a digitally controlled, horizontally loaded film player to digitize the day's footage. Despite the game's reliance on the filmed footage for various functions, in the end, approximately two hours of Hammer on film came were ultimately used. Despite the limited interaction during the process - and even more limited with Sorger alone - the times Hammer did engage with him and the crew still live on as positive memories. Hammer displayed a deep knowledge and passion for video games, computers and technology. Sorger recalls the rapper "totally [understood] games", as he talked about pixels, resolutions, how his costume would look digitized, how lighting affected the digitization process and the look and feel of the other actors. As unique an experience as bonding over technology with a pop culture icon was,

Sorger found greater inspiration in Hammer's discussions about the importance of “his posse” and the path of redemption. Hammer explained that it didn’t matter what members of his posse had done before because they had seen the error of their ways by following him. “At one point, he rapped to me about what his posse meant to him. It was magical, the rhymes and cadence, like reading Shakespeare. I couldn't pick up every word and decipher every meaning in real-time, but it left me awestruck. Like I had just gone to an important poetry reading. There was no music, and I honestly couldn't tell if Hammer was making it up as he went along or if this was something he had written that he had never performed before or if it just sounded more profound without accompaniment. [...] I had listened to a ton of his music, as I'm a firm believer in 'immersion' when making games. I couldn't recognize what he rapped but I could tell he was a genius and was baring his soul to me, and only me, right then, right there. I've really never recounted this before to anyone.” After the completion of the suit, Sorger was more motivated than ever to create a successful game. A game that he could not only be proud of, but one that the man providing the inspiration for it would be proud as well. When the game entered production in 1994, a team of five people were tasked with creating and finishing the game within only a few months, as was typical for that era of gaming. The Hammer team consisted of Sorger as Lead Developer, a Digitizer, an Artist, a Designer, and for only a little bit of time, one other Developer. Most of the team wore multiple professional hats. The Designer also directed the shoot and served as “general project Superman”. The Artist also worked on final cleanup, UI, background design, animation and more. Sorger himself integrated all the graphics and audio along with writing the features and gameplay. Using Hammer’s story of rebirth as a jumping off point, he began to think of ways to manifest that into gameplay. Hammer’s words reverberated with truth in his ears throughout the design process. “He wanted to tell a story of rebirth, of exposing hidden potential. Of uncovering that one thing in all of us that we are destined to do, when we become who we were meant to be. It's a righteous theme and one I honestly tried to design toward. [...] Back in the day, the programmers supplied as much of the design as anyone else did, including artists, animators, writers, producers and actual designers. I don't really think anyone got Hammer's intent the way I did. But I had heard him rap, to me. I heard the passion, and the design and conflict just clicked in my mind. And I really think that would have been a very powerful game.” The rap Hammer had privately shared with Sorger did more than just inspire the game’s direction and Lead Developer, it became part of the fabric of the game’s DNA. From that rap, not only did Sorger latch onto the obvious lyrical threads, he found a healthy amount of subtext to work with. The stories Hammer used to create his rap told of people being enticed by evil, people becoming evil, people becoming further and further from the person that they were meant to be. Hammer also rapped about “soulfire”, a metaphoric aura of exposed soul energy that could transform the world around it. It was a concept Sorger had never heard of in a song before, but he knew he wanted it to be part of the game. “I could almost visualize the energy as he chanted about it”, he remembers. The design Sorger

decided on was a take on another musician-led video game, "Michael Jackson's Moonwalker," a 2D side-scrolling beat em 'up released by Sega in 1990. Just like Jackson in "Moonwalker," Sorger's "Hammer" was designed not to attack enemies directly but to shoot them with soulfire that could convert them into friendly members of Hammer's posse. The process of conversion wasn't as simple as on and off, though: using classic arcade game Q-Bert as an influence, the process was made multi-pronged as he created a three-step sequence for the mechanism. "I know [Q-Bert] seems like a silly 8-bit game, but trying to bounce in such a way to bring about a complete change to the whole level when each square goes through a 3 step sequence - A, B, C, A, B, C - is really hard, takes great patience and concentration. I wanted the player to find that hidden A in all the onscreen characters and convert them from Cs." Each of the ten levels and boss levels would begin with a streaming sprite movie of Hammer himself introducing the level with pithy quips. The music would then cue and Hammer would start dancing, synchronized to the beat. Moving through the street-based levels, enemies were designed to represent criminals and would enter the level in waves of varying intensity with animation set off-beat and not synchronized with the music. Using Hammer's soulfire projectiles, players were tasked with converting all the enemies from criminals into posse members. When hit with soulfire, enemies would change which step in the sequence they were currently on, flipping to friendly or continuing to be antagonistic. Once an enemy became a posse member, they would go through a transformation animation before joining Hammer in dancing, synchronized to the music. Posse members collected moved with Hammer as the player progressed through the level. Enemies would be treated the same, as if both enemy and posse member had come into contact with soulfire. Depending on the level, the enemy may be converted into an additional posse member, or that posse member may be converted back into an enemy. The mechanic ended up not coming together quite as planned. The design initially called for tighter choreography, but Sorger says it was compromised when they tried to create random-sized waves positioned onto the background. "It ended up looking a little more like a mob than I had imagined in my mind. There were some bugs, shortcomings, in the animation system too which resulted in some jerkiness as posse members transformed and tried to get back into the click-track animation rate. In order to get enough variation, we had to mix and match the criminals more than we wanted to. Criminals from level 4 would show up in level 2 and not match the background aesthetic. But they still kinda worked." Levels were completed when all enemies had been converted into posse members and they surround Hammer before the game cuts to a congratulatory screen with the player's score for the level. Each of the basic levels were slated to use this structure, with variables coming as more enemies and varied posse conversion rates. Boss levels (like the one seen in the gameplay video) appeared at the end of a street, typically in an alley. The posse mechanic and the posse were removed. Here, the objective was to blast the boss - the titular evil DJ Evil D - with soulfire before he can deplete Hammer's health bar with evilfire. A large, sinister background video was supposed to play in the background in an attempt to disrupt the player's vision. All character animation was digitized from the earlier filming. The images were all separated and compressed, but retained relative position animation so that they could be placed in the correct positions for each scene. Strategically located TVs and screens throughout levels displayed MTV-like videos (not the black and white placeholder videos found in the short gameplay clip online) chronicling the game's story and the characters dancing. The soundtrack was supposed to be "awesome" due to being true stereo 16-bit audio. (This was atypical for games

released on Sega's consoles at the time. It was to featuring 6-8 of Hammer's full songs in 44khz redbook stereo CD quality audio). Ultimately, Sorger's work would become a casualty of a changing societal ecosystem. Despite having the artist himself involved directly in the project, assets planned for inclusion in the game were denied to the team. Original plans called for the use of MTV-like videos featuring Hammer, including his actual music videos, along with what was filmed specifically for the project, but these were forced to be scrapped for reasons Sorger thinks may have been related to licensing costs. That setback did not prove to be the final nail in the coffin, though. America in 1994 was not only filled with tension over violent video games, it was also brimming with racial tension between white and black Americans. The emergence of gangsta rap, the O.J. Simpson murder case, and most importantly, the police beating of Rodney King and the subsequent L.A. riots had the nation on edge. And while Hammer's game was neither graphically violent nor inappropriate - a surprising design choice which was more aesthetic than anything else - the climate's volatility is the cause to which Sorger attributes the game's cancellation. As the story of the game was about Hammer's redemption of those who lost their way in the city, they were designed as criminals, thugs and hooligans. One such enemy can be seen leaving a store, carrying a TV, alluding to it being looted. Los Angeles at the time was still recovering from massive race riots two years prior, including a riot resulting in over $1 billion in property damage, 53 deaths, more than 2,000 injured, and more than 11,000 arrested. The potential for negative publicity and attention seemed to far outweigh any benefit of releasing the game in the opinion of those in control of the project and it was quietly cancelled. This was long before "Grand Theft Auto III" redefined mature gaming as we all know it today. The bar for flagrant fouls was still very, very low. Gaming was still considered by most who didn't partake as a niche market: a child's toy fad that would flame out at any moment. No thought was given to capturing a mature audience because the market simply didn't exist out in the open yet. And thanks to 1992's "Mortal Kombat" and the subsequent US government hearings on the subject of video game violence, many in the game industry became fearful of becoming the next target of negative press, boycotts and government officials over their commercial assets. Though he was unable to see the project through to completion, Sorger still looks back fondly on the work and the time he devoted to it. "In some ways I succeeded, and in other ways, I failed. Looking back, I wish I would have spent more time working on [online gaming] and less trying to compete in an already crowded console and PC CD-ROM market. But I am as proud of that game as I am of anything I have ever done."

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SHADOW OF ATLANTIS

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Shadow of Atlantis is a SEGA 32X pre-rendered Point & Click adventure game created by SEGA Multimedia Studio, a development team established by SEGA of America (SoA) in 1993 that is mostly known for Jurassic Park on SEGA CD. In 1994 the studio (led by SoA associate producer Eric Quakenbush) made a stunning concept FMV of a Sega CD adventure based on two famous Jules Verne novels, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea, and Mysterious Island. The project was tentatively named Nautilus, but according to Quakenbush the team later changed the title in order to avoid retail confusion, because there was a CD-ROM reference product with the same name, already available for PC and Mac. When this concept FMV was shown to the public for the first time at the 1994 Tokyo Toy Show, the game was already scheduled as a SEGA 32X CD game and now known as "Shadow of Atlantis". The FMV (which, according to Quakenbush, costed about $500,000 to develop) was also presented at the 1994 Summer CES and E3 1995. However, by now the 32X was already

dying, and consequently SEGA tried to move the game to Saturn and PC. In 1996, SoA decided to shelve the project for good. Quakenbush wrote on the SEGAFans website that Shadow of Atlantis was cancelled because it "never really won management over totally", even if "the game was truly loved by the individual contributors at SEGA of America and SEGASoft". Screenshots of Shadow of Atlantis were even printed on European 32X boxes. Thankfully, Quakenbush was able to preserve a great deal of information and images about Shadow of Atlantis on his own website (www.action-packed.net). Apparently, the game started with the unnamed main character being shipwrecked on a mysterious island. However, he soon ends up joining Nemo and his crew aboard the Nautilus, which was basically the main hub of the game. Inside, players could interact with the crew, find clues, get useful items, and look for new destinations by scanning the surroundings with the Observation Balloon and the Ocean Floor Thermography Station. The newly discovered location would then be added to the auto-navigation chart. From the Nautilus the player could also control a Remote Operations Vehicle that could be used to explore normally inaccessible areas and could be equipped with a manipulator claw, an energy weapon, or a suction scoop. Planned locations and creatures inspired by the works of Jules Verne's would have included the ruins of Atlantis, wrecked ships, frozen pirate boats, the center of the Earth, krakens, mutants, dinosaurs, and more. Just like other Point & Click adventures, the gameplay of Shadow of Atlantis was mainly about finding clues and solving puzzles, but similarly to Jurassic Park CD, it also featured action sequences. Furthermore, in an email interview, Eric Quackenbush revealed to Unseen64, further information on the enigmatic mutation that hit the Nautilus' crew: "The mutation was being caused by the Atlantean device that the Kraken got access to after an earthquake / avalanche. The crew of the sub were hit with a beam from the mutation device and Nemo didn't have time to figure out a way to reverse its effects. The player is changing just like the crew did but has clues to hunt down the source so he might be able to save himself and the other recent mutants." Shadow of Atlantis was also planned to feature live action FMV. Eric Quackenbush wrote on SEGAFans that he wanted actors such as "Oliver Reed, Omar Sharif, Malachi Throne, or Charlton Heston as Nemo". SEGA Multimedia Studio closed down in 1995 after the release of Wild Woody, a Sega CD platformer. Eric Quakenbush was also the Associate Producer of cancelled 32X racer-puzzle game hybrid Virtua Hamster (1996).

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SONIC MARS

Article by: Jeff Wheaton

It was the mid 1990's, and Sega was not in a good way. The 32X add-on for the Genesis/Mega Drive console was the hot new focus, but it was not selling as planned. Logic would dictate that, as with any Sega hardware,

a fully-fledged Sonic the Hedgehog game would be the tool needed to fix everything and save the day. One that would utilize the advanced hardware of the 32X by providing fully 3D worlds for Sonic to speed through, and would tie into the then-popular Sonic the Hedgehog TV show. Knuckles' Chaotix, which would be released for the 32X in 1995 as the only title in the Sonic the Hedgehog series... was not that game. That game was Sonic Mars, and it would never see the light of day. Sonic Mars was to be based on the Sonic SatAM TV show, and would feature characters and some locales from the show, such as Sally Acorn, the Freedom Fighters, and Knothole village. The game was being developed by Sega Technical Institute, who had previously developed Sonic the Hedgehog 2, Sonic the Hedgehog 3, and Sonic Spinball. Leading and producing the project was Micheal Kosaka, and Chris Senn (who would later return to the Sonic the Hedgehog series with 2014's Sonic Boom) was the game's lead designer. The story of Sonic Mars focused on a virtual reality computer world called “Micro Mobius”. Doctor Robotnik, as usual, wants to erase this world and reconstruct it in his own image. Sonic is called to action when he discovers that his friends were imprisoned in the world by Robotnik while he was away from his home at Knothole Village to check on a security alarm. Characters from other Sonic the Hedgehog games would have made an appearance, in addition to characters from the SatAM cartoon series, along with new characters such as Tiara, who was to be a major part of the plot of the game's story. While Sonic would have been able to run in 3D space, the camera would always face “north”, providing a limited field of view similar to the previous side-scrolling games in the series. The environments in the game would be made up of simple polygon shapes, some of which could move. Sonic would be able to run through loops and corkscrews, and ride on merry-go-round-like platforms that would move vertically and horizontally. Trademarks of the older Sonic games would also be present, such as keeping the goal post in the air for bonus points, spring platforms, the ability to charge up spin dash attacks, and special zones reminiscent of the ones seen in Sonic the Hedgehog 3. Sonic Mars was also slated to have a two-player cooperative mode not dissimilar to the cooperative modes found in previous Sonic games. Upon finishing all three acts of a zone, Sonic would rescue one of his friends, who would then be unlocked for cooperative play. However, while playing cooperatively, the camera would stay centered on Sonic, giving the cooperative player a limited radius to actually move about in. There were going to be five playable characters that Sonic would have to save throughout the game, those being Tails and Knuckles from the previous Sonic games, Bunnie and Sally Acorn from the SatAM television show, and Tiara, who was created specifically for Sonic Mars. While Tiara is yet to make an appearance in any Sonic games, she does appear in two issues of the Sonic the Hedgehog comic by

Archie Comics. In cooperative play, the second player would be able to hit the start button to cycle through the various characters that Sonic had saved so far. Each one would have unique abilities that could be used for navigation and defeating enemies. Tails would have retained Sonic's spin dash and jump moves, but would also be able to fly through the air and also carry Sonic across the level. Knuckles would have been able to also use the same spin dash and jump moves, but would also be able to glide through the air and scale walls. Bunnie was intended to be used as a melee combat character, being able to throw out punches instead of a spin dash, and being able to use a mechanical arm to carry herself and Sonic up vertical walls. Sally would have the ability to call upon her computer, Nicole, to open doors, disable traps, and access computers within the game, and would also be able to use a hoverboard that would act similarly to Tails' flying ability. Tiara would be similar to tails, but would be able to fly further distances, and have more powerful attacks. The 32X add-on was released very close to the launch of the Sega Saturn, and due to low hardware sales, and technical limitations of the 32X hardware, along with the departure of the game's producer, Micheal Kosaka, development on Sonic Mars was shifted to the advanced hardware offered by the Sega Saturn. What had been made of the game already was designed to be easily ported to Saturn hardware, however, and the game would resurface sometime later as another unseen game known as Sonic X-Treme.

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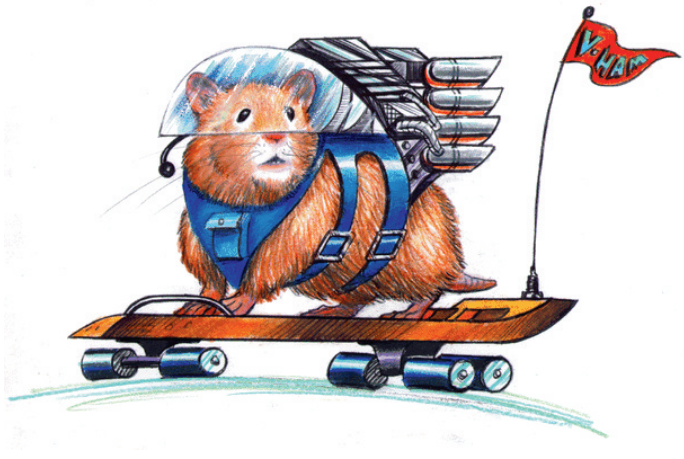
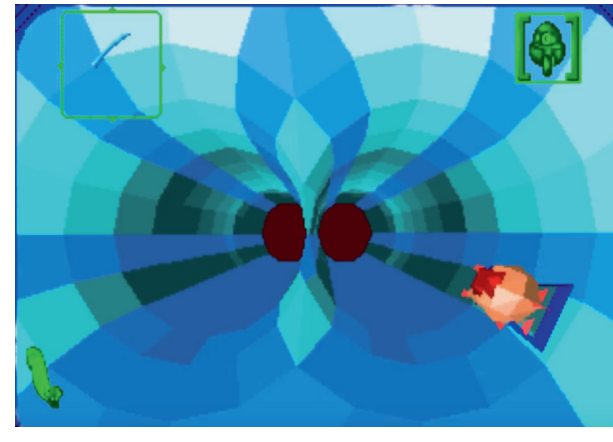
VIRTUA HAMSTER

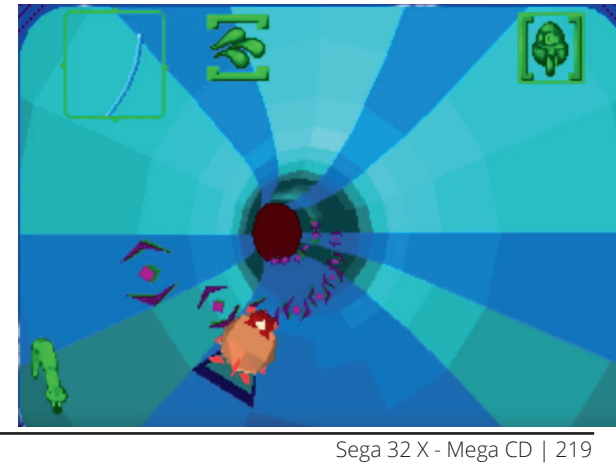


Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Virtua Hamster is a 3D maze racer developed for 32x by David A. Palmer Productions, a developer mostly known for GBA titles based on licensed properties such as Men in Black and Star Wars. Asked by Sega of America (SoA) to create a puzzle game for the ill-fated peripheral, in 1994 SoA associate producer Eric Quakenbush wrote the design document of Virtua Hamster, which was then briefly shown in a video at the Summer 1995 Consumer Electronics Show (CES). In a short preview, American magazine SEGA Visions reported that Virtua Hamster was scheduled for a Fall 1995 release. SoA wanted the game to be one of few original 32x games, but according to Eric Quackenbush, ultimately they decided to shelve all of the projects for the add-on that weren't going to be finished soon. David A. Palmer revealed to Unseen64 in 2009 that Virtua Hamster was 99% complete when it was cancelled and that the game was moved to Saturn after the 32x version was dropped. However, the project never progressed, and because SoA still owed David A. Palmer a large amount of money, Virtua Hamster's intellectual property was transferred to his company, following a legal settlement. In 2001 Eric Quackenbush said to GamePro that "a British company picked up development for a PC version after SEGA stopped production", but nothing ever came of this. In a 2009 discussion with SEGA-16.com, Palmer expressed interested in reviving the game; yet, as of 2015, nothing has been announced. Thanks to the design document, we have an outline of Virtua Hamster's narrative: An evil scientist steals the blueprints of the S.H.R.E.D. (Super High-speed RodEnt Delivery) system, developed by the

US military, alongside its test pilot (a hamster named Chip) with the purpose of using jetpack-equipped rodents (and the bizarre skateboards they ride) to steal classified documents. In terms of gameplay, this boils down to get to the exit of a maze before your opponents. It was originally planned that in order to win the race, players had to get all the blueprints in a stage; however, when the real development started, it was decided to remove the blueprints and to add little robots called Skuttles, which assisted Chip in finding the exit and opened doors for him. Initially an old hamster that rode a "Model-T" type of rocket was supposed to help Chip find the blueprints, but that remained as just an idea on paper. The player's main objective was to escape the evil scientist's laboratory, which meant finding the way around the test mazes, made of transparent tubes. Players would have had to avoid hazards such as a mechanical snake that roamed the labyrinths, a cat that killed Chip if he ended on the floor after a wrong jump, and the evil rodents owned by the scientist. Each of them had its own peculiarities: Maximillion the mole delivered stunning punches to anyone who got near him; Gizzard the desert rat was fast and small, but fearless in his attacks; Sherman the armadillo used his heavy body to slam opponents; Outback the Kangaroo rat stunned enemies with his strong back limbs; Thorn the black rat was fast and vicious; Stockpile the pack rat fought decently too but he was mainly interested in grabbing and storing every item he found. The mechanical snake could even eat the evil rodents, and he became gradually slower with every meal he consumed. Sometimes, the snake would leave behind dangerous slicks of oil on the road that had to be avoided. However, if the player could make the artificial serpent fall on the floor, the cat would temporarily incapacitate him. Another factor was the S.H.R.E.D.'s handling, because the jetpack mounted on the rodents' back was always on, meaning that the only way to go in reverse was to press down to fire retro rockets, or to use some items. There were many items available to help Chip in his journey: Burst of Speed enabled Chip to destroy barriers and wipe out the snake; Drag Chute was utilised to completely stop Chip after using the Burst of Speed power-up, and it also doubled as a parachute when in the air; Seeds could be stored in the rodents' cheeks and then spit forward or backward at opponents; Super Squeal was a very loud scream that stunned nearby enemies; Energy Sap was a harpoon-like weapon used to suck energy from the opponents and the snake; Pixie Stick gave rodents temporary invincibility, Popcorn Barriers had to be eaten in order to pass through; and finally, a Retro Rocket Booster could be used to propel players backwards. By chewing, blowing and then spitting another item - Chewing Gum, players could also create small and big bubbles; while the former simply blocked the wheels of the rival rodent's skateboard, sending them flying in the process, the latter completely engulfed an opponent,





who had then to clean himself up before continuing the race. Virtua Hamster normally used a first person-camera, but during jumps between the tubes and while Chip was on the floor, the camera switched to third-person. Interestingly, Chip was originally named Buzz, but the developers decided to change it to avoid sharing a name with Pixar's popular Toy Story movie. In 2009, a very early demo of Virtua Hamster, featuring a 2-player mode, was released by Ryo Suzuki on Hidden-Palace website. After dropping Virtua Hamster, David A. Palmer Productions went to develop some titles for GBC and GBA and Virtua Hamster wasn't the only game of their to be cancelled - In 2000, they cancelled a game based on the Sydney 2000 Olympics, intended for the Game Boy Color. Their last game was a puzzle game named Tringo for Game Boy Advance in 2006.

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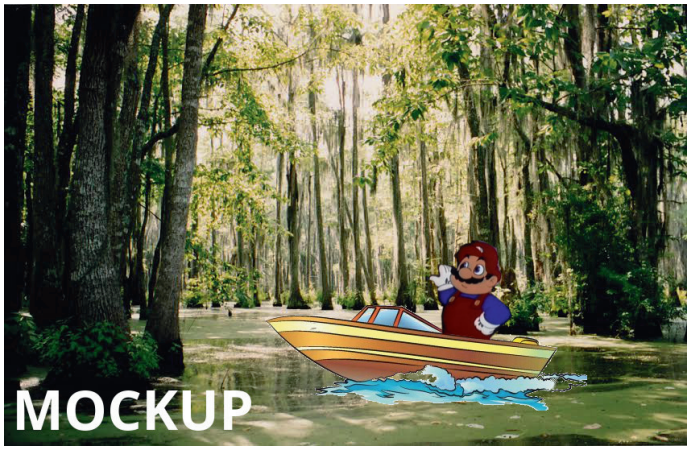
Philips CD-i

Article by: Sam Minnich

In the early-to-mid nineties, compact discs were everywhere. They were being used to store anything from music to software, and usually when there is software, there are games. Nintendo, seeing this opportunity, originally planned to work with Sony to make a CD add-on for the Super Nintendo, but due to disagreements Nintendo secretly partnered with Philips to create the add-on. Philips started in the early 20th century as a European light bulb filaments manufacturer. As time went on, they began to stretch into other emerging technologies like radio and television. Then in the early 80's, they partnered with Sony and developed the compact disc (CD). As time went on, Nintendo lost interest in the SNES-CD peripheral, but Philips was still planning to create such hardware and developed a stand-alone system, still being allowed to use some of Nintendo's characters for its games. This new console was known as the Philips CD-i. While it could play games, this was not the aspect Philips focused on; what they focused on were the multimedia capabilities, being able to play films and music. The Philips CD-i was released in December of 1991 in North America, and early 1992 in Europe. Depending where it was sold, the price ranged anywhere from $699 to $1400. Phillips told some newspapers at the time they had sold 1 million CD-i systems, but as far as we know there is no actual data available and the console was still considered a commercial failure. A total of 124 games were released for the system. Most games released on the system were cheaply made, and are notoriously known and mocked for how bad they were. The most popular and commonly known games are those that used the Nintendo characters. These games included Hotel Mario, a game using the beloved side scrolling plumber to reverse the actions of Bowser's minion by closing all the doors of each level of the franchised hotels, all the while being pasted together by horrible animation done using MS Paint-like artwork. The Legend of Zelda series received three games on the CD-i. Link: The Faces Of Evil and Zelda Sword of Gamelon were both sidescrollers, one featuring Link as the main character the next featuring Zelda as the main character. Both had the same side scrolling style gameplay plagued with horrible controls, and laughable cheaply animated cutscenes. The third Zelda game, being Zelda's Adventure, featured an isometric view similar to that of the traditional Zelda titles. Zelda's adventure starred Zelda as the main playable character in a photorealistic world, with the horrible animated cutscenes being replaced with horribly acted full motion video clips. Although the system received a price slash in '94, lowering the price to $299, Philips had received enough damage and the Philips CD-i was discontinued in 1996. Due to Philips' endeavor with the system, they reportedly lost close to $1 billion dollars. Reasons for the failure of the system are very apparent. One reason was its chaotic development: Nintendo went to Philips just to break it off with Sony. The SNES CD add-on by Philips was planned so Sony couldn't profit selling Nintendo's games, as it seems that in the signed agreement Nintendo did not notice that Sony would have taken all the money from games sold on CD. When Nintendo discontinued their partnership with Philips, they left them with an incomplete piece of hardware, which became useless without good games. Another problem was the price: for a company to ask the public to pay that much for a device that wasn't aimed at any specific audience was a lot to ask for. The CD-i was not made specifically for the gaming market, it was made as an entertainment device. It could play music, movies, and as a bonus you could play games; and because of this indirect marketing nobody understood it, thereby making it an undesirable product. Some also blame the power of the system, or the lack thereof. While Phillips had permission to use some of Nintendo's property, they took their time and when they released "Link: The Faces of Evil" and "Zelda: Wand of Gamelon" in October of 1993, Nintendo had already announced their plans for a new system called Project Reality (which eventually evolved into the Nintendo 64), and only a year later Sony released the Playstation in Japan. The Philips CD-i was a system made to fail. Philips didn't know who to sell it to, and nobody knew if they wanted it. The company was still aiming high with their console before realizing its failure, and spent millions of dollars to develop overly ambitious games that never made it. In the following pages, you'll find out more about a few of these legendary lost Philips CD-i games.

PHILIPS CD-I

MARIO TAKES AMERICA



Article by: Luca Taborelli

Mario Takes America is a cancelled action platformer game that was in development from 1992 to 1994 at the Toronto-based Cigam Entertainment for the ill-fated Philips CD-I console. This was intended to be the first game from Cigam and the third Mario game planned for the CDI, following Hotel Mario and the unreleased Mario Wacky Worlds. It would have formed a trilogy of Nintendo-licensed Mario games published by Philips, just like the infamous Zelda CDI trilogy: Zelda's Adventure (by Viridis), Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon and Link: The Faces of Evil (by Animation Magic). Mysteriously, while even the unfinished Wacky Worlds gained some exposure from savvy prototype hunters online, Mario Takes America was since forgotten by the wider world, fading into obscurity, and until recently, next to zero information has been available on it. However, thanks to an anonymous contributor, research by Interactive Dreams, Liam Robertson and a former Cigam employee on the AssemblerGames Forum, we are able to preserve some more memories about this unreleased Mario project. "The idea behind Mario Takes America was to educate younger audiences about American culture, under the guise of a fun 3D platformer. It was to feature Mario traveling all over the country, running around in levels based off real life locations, such as New York." A video from the development of the game was reported to have been shown at the New York CDi 3 conference in October 1993 and at the 1994 Winter CES, according to Interactive Dreams, but unfortunately, this footage is still missing. We know from the cancelled Mario's Wacky Worlds that unfinished CDI games are not particularly that great to look at or play, but we hope to be able to see some screenshots and footage from Mario Takes America one day. In the beginning, a key part of the initially outlined concept of Mario Takes America involved levels made up of real life photography, overlaid by 2D sprites to illustrate characters. Describing the game's intended visual style, one of the artist who worked on it likened it to the movie, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?". The photos and videos that made up the title's locales were filmed on location and Cigam travelled all around the US to capture them. "The film crew even used a helicopter to shoot some of the more tricky sequences. [...] We compensated by filming strictly defined POV areas like the Niagara River, open channels in the Louisiana Bayou and highways in Monument Valley. That was the best part – filming the background assets all over the US in camera cars, speedboats and helicopters." "Mario was rendered as he was in the cartoons. It was 2D Animation but we added shading to match wherever the light source was in the background film footage. [...] All the footage gathered in each sequence would be put into a Movie Premiere at Graumanns Theatre in Los Angeles – all about Mario's travels." According to UK CD-i magazine issue 3 from 1993: "Software company CIGAM has had to shoot original footage on location for much of the title, including scenes where Super Mario flies over the Manhattan skyline, falls over a waterfall and skims across a lake by boat. The film crew used a helicopter to shoot some of the more tricky sequences, and it is believed this will be the first CDi game to use such dramatic footage. The storyline involves Super Mario arriving in New York, traveling across the US and eventually arriving in Hollywood where he stars in his own interactive film. He travels by truck, train, car, aeroplane, helicopter and even a motorbike! No release date has yet been given for the title, but early clips were on show at the CDi 3 Conference in New York in October. The film footage looks quite stunning and will bring a new degree of realism to the game." In Mario Takes America there were "first person view" (with Mario shown from front or behind) on-rail levels / sequences that used those filmed backgrounds, including: New York / Manhattan Skyscraper Helicopter Ride (with "New York New York" as background music), Niagara Falls Upper and Lower Rapids Barrel Game, Louisiana Bayou with a Speedboat, Vintage Steam Train fight (on top of travelling boxcar) in Texas, Badlands Motorcycle Chase, Las Vegas Neon Race (never completed), Los Angeles Car Race on Highway at Night. All of these were coded and playable, but as the Philips CD-I was not enough powerful, the team had to degrade a lot of the animation to get the collision detection to work. "We did manage to get Mario to work on several different levels in perspective. He could drive into the scene a bit and then back out to avoid obstacles, but it was a nightmare for the Tech Boys to code and keep him exactly on the highway or river sometimes." There were also 2D Platform sequences with images of real-world places as the backgrounds including: Fort Knox

Gold (patterned after the one in 007 Goldfinger), Carlsbad Caverns, Hollywood Sign and Final boss battle at Graumann's Theatre. Some more places that were recorded are: a Detroit Auto Factory (never completed), Florida Space Shuttle Ride, Monument Valley Motorcycle Race on Highway (they even got the rights to Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" to be used in this level). As we can read from the memories of the former Cigam employee: "As far as the gameplay went, the style of game was driven by the footage that was shot. The New York Skyline was a 2D side scrolling game shot out the left side of a helicopter. Most of the footage was shot moving towards the action, behind Mario. This was true for the Niagara Falls scenes, The Bayou, the Monument Valley Highway and the LA Freeway scenes. There was a fight on the top of a train with the camera pointed forward on one of the passenger cars where you could see the Koopas climbing up the side of the car in front of you. They would reach your position and fight with Mario. Each enemy had a different fighting style." "The Space Shuttle game had Mario using the Canadarm to both pull coins into the shuttle bay and to punch enemies and asteroids which could contain more coins. In the Hollywood Sign game you would chase electrical charges around the letters." The team behind Mario Takes America, Cigam Entertainment and their Cinevillage office, was founded by a Canadian investor named Howard Greenspan, who sadly died some years ago. It seems that there were only a couple of developers at Cigam and the very first programmer who was hired quit the job after only 3 weeks, after reading the CDI's tech specs. He said: "Our whole foundation is built on sand". Once the team had captured the materials for its backgrounds and eventually began importing them into the game, disaster struck. Due to the CD-I's restrictive hardware capabilities, once the team had programmed the backdrops into the stages, they had very little memory left to add in their planned Mario sprites. The result was a technical nightmare for its programmers. The project was too ambitious and the CDI was a huge failure. Even Philips, who were once interested in the game, saw that Cigam was unable to fulfill the original concept and decided to cut their funds. Cigam had to stop their work on Mario Takes America, but Howard was still hopeful to find another publisher with new funds and rework the game under a new identity. At one stage, the producer even attempted to form a partnership with SEGA to replace Nintendo's mascot with Sonic The Hedgehog. However, this never went forward as his attempts to contact them about it went ignored. He then asked the art department to replace all the Mario sprites with a new character of their own creation, called "Metal". "Metal was a Rock & Roll Star who looked like Dee Snider from Twisted Sister. He had a big Roadie Assistant named "Heavy" (I kid you not) who would help out from time to time. As I said we simply renamed all the sprites and had the programming dept plug the new sprites into the code. MRIONY04 became HEVYNY04 and so on." As crazy as it sounds, even with this change, the project was doomed. Soon, Cigam Entertainment closed for bankruptcy, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce proceeded to mortgage all of the company's assets. "In November of 1994, Cigam relied on those new policies to obtain a line of credit from CIBC to finance its operations. However, during the past summer, CIBC managed to mishandle the account and the claims and policies made previously no longer applied. As a consequence, the bank demanded additional security — a collateral mortgage on Mr. Greenspan's personal property. Cigam's banking arrangements deteriorated rapidly, causing immediate negative effects to the operations of the company. During these events, Mr. Greenspan attempted to have CIBC value his company's assets in accordance to the new policies it had claimed in April of 1994. He brought his concerns to senior executives and the CIBC ombudsman, but they claimed to have no knowledge of the new lending policies the president had declared. Eventually, this led to the bankruptcy of Cigam Entertainment Inc." Amazingly, it appears that the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce repossessed all of the game's assets from Cigam, which goes a big way to explaining why so little information and media of this game was ever recovered. It is still very possible that the Mario Takes America assets could still be lost somewhere in the CIBC archives. Maybe one day, some nice CIBC employee will rediscover them and decide to share this piece of gaming history with the world, but until then, we'll still have to dream about this hugely obscure Mario game that was never released for the CDI.

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MARIO'S WACKY WORLDS

Article by: Andrew Borman

When Nintendo and Philips inked a deal to create a CD-ROM system for the Super Nintendo, Philips also licensed Nintendo characters that could be used on their CD-Interactive platform. Super Mario World had been released by Nintendo to critical acclaim, and developer Novalogic, working with Philips, hoped to

capitalize on it with a follow-up exclusively for the CD-i platform. Work began on Super Mario's Wacky Worlds in 1992. Initial prototypes used sprites that were ripped from Super Mario World, reportedly using a VHS recording to aid in the process. Variations on these designs were made, and new enemies created, such as a walrus. Due to the use of the CD-ROM format, the game could have a huge variety of graphics and music, moving away from the limitations of the Super Nintendo. Large, hand-drawn backgrounds provided color and detail that was not possible on the Super Nintendo. While providing some advantages, the CD-i also introduced a number of challenges, namely that it wasn't built to create a sprite based game such as Super Mario World, while also lacking any of the Mode 7 abilities that powered some of Super Mario World's effects. Limitations of the CD-i also meant that programmers had to carefully craft each stage as too many effects quickly slowed the system. Yoshi would have been too difficult to program at the time, and was left out entirely. Despite these challenges, Novalogic pushed forward on Wacky Worlds. Instead of taking place in the Mushroom Kingdom or Dinosaur Land, the game features worlds that were heavily based on real world locations. The ancient world featured levels based on Greek, Aztec, and Egyptian architecture. Haunted, Jungle, Arctic, Wacky, and Tubular worlds were planned, with the final game hoping to have a total of 60-70 levels. A pre-alpha prototype of the game leaked sometime after a CD-r of a demo was sold on Ebay, with an ISO appearing online sometime after. It is unknown if these events are related, as two more prototypes supposedly exist in the hands of private collectors. Gameplay in the prototype stayed true to the Super Mario World formula, but due to the early nature of this version there were many features missing. While Mario could move and jump across the stages, swimming and sliding had yet to be implemented. Powerups were also missing from the prototype, although they were planned for the final release. While some levels look fairly complete graphically, some levels had yet to implement proper graphics, using simple boxes to represent the levels, while others are completely non-functioning. It is unknown how the levels would progress or if there would be an overworld as in Super Mario World. Despite the CD format providing space, no new sounds or music are available in the prototype. Music and the jumping sound are ripped directly from Super Mario World. Nintendo representatives were reportedly impressed with the demo, but with the CD-i platform's failure in the marketplace, Super Mario's Wacky Worlds was cancelled. Even if their last released game seems to be a Delta Force collection in 2009, as of early 2016 Novalogic seems to be still alive and Electronic Arts is a minority shareholder of the company.

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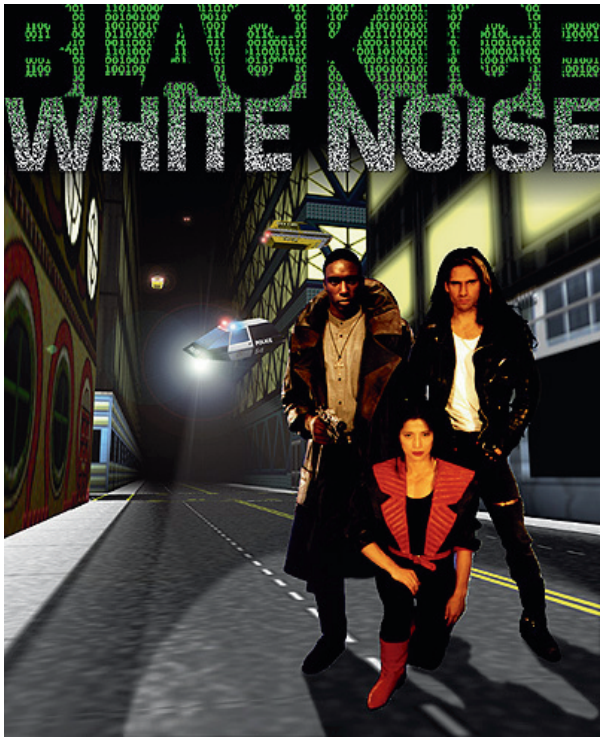
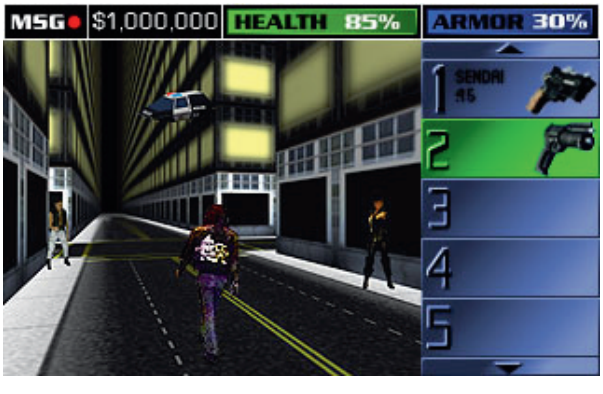
Atari Jaguar

Article by: Sam Batten

After cancelling their venture into the 16-bit console market (Phanter project), Atari needed a new project to compete with Sega and Nintendo in the "next" generation of 32 and 64 bit hardware. Thus, in late 1993/early 1994, the Atari Jaguar was born, marking the final console for the Atari brand. The Jaguar would later compete with the Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and the Nintendo 64 systems,but at it's inception it was marketed as the first ever 64-bit console. Now, even if the Jaguar was marketed as 64-bit, this technically wasn't the case. Some of the architecture was indeed 64-bit, but this was only a small portion; the rest was was more 32-bit than 64-bit. The Jaguar was also using cartridges for its games, which meant that it also suffered from memory limitations. Unfortunately, the Jaguar suffered from a rocky launch. The controller was said to be far too complex and bulky, especially in comparison to the simple yet effective Genesis and SNES controllers. In fact, the Jaguar's joypad could be described as a Genesis pad with a 12 button number pad glued to the bottom. You can see where there might be some difficulties. The game library for the Jaguar was also extremely poor since there was not much support from third parties mainly due to the complexity of the multi-chip architecture. There was also a lack of internal development by Atari which, combined with the lack of third party support, resulted in a game library of only 67 licensed titles. These included White Men Can't Jump (1995), Tempest 2000 (1994), Iron Soldier (1994), Highlander (1995), Rayman (1995), Missile Command 3D (1995), and Kasumi Ninja (1994). Most of the community agree that the best game to come out on the Jaguar was Alien Vs Predator (1994), but that was not enough to sell the console. Atari did try to keep the Jaguar alive by producing the Atari Jaguar CD, a console peripheral that gave the Jaguar the ability to play disc games, but the release of the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn in 1995 prevented this from ever taking off. In the end, the Jaguar sold no more than 250,000 consoles and was discontinued in 1996. Atari tried to plan ahead of the competition, but the the Jaguar just could not compete. However, this was not the end for the console. The Jaguar gained a cult following when Hasbro bought Atari in 1998 and declared the Jaguar an open platform. This move created a developer base that still produces homebrew games for the console to this day. As you can imagine, a failed console from such a popular brand as Atari can only mean one thing: lots of ambitious and over hyped games that never delivered or were never released at all. In the following pages, we'll check a few of the most interesting lost projects once planned for the ill-fated Atari Jaguar.

BLACK ICE / WHITE NOISE

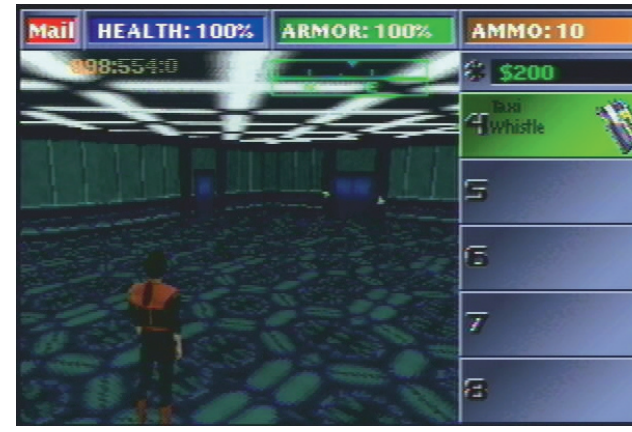




Article by: Brett Bryant

Atari released their Jaguar console in November 1993, but it was soon clear that the product would have been a huge failure. Faran Thomason, producer for Atari at the time, said the game to “put Atari back on the map” was to be released in December 1995. However, that didn't happen. Black Ice/White Noise (AKA Chaos Agenda) is now known as an ambitious but failed open world FMV (full motion video) game for the Atari Jaguar CD add on. Production began when the President of Atari, Sam Tramiel, mandated that Atari create a mascot similar to Mario and Sonic. Several animals were suggested, but the team decided to go with a cyberpunk game starring a “slick, stylin’ Aresenio Hall-esque black hacker dude, a beautiful, ass-kicking Japanese female street samurai, and a long-haired, mirrorshaded, leather-jacketed caucasian borderline alcoholic burnout.” This was an exact quote from Faran Thomason. The gameplay would have been revolutionary for its time, planning to be some sort of early sandbox open world game ala GTA. All characters were portrayed by videos of real people blue screened into the game. In third person, the player would walk around in a Doom-style 3D city where they could steal cars, run from the police, and hack into the “C net.” There was even supposed to be a moral choice system. When the player talked to someone, a video of the character's face would pop up. The player could then choose to go into the conversation with either a good, bad, or neutral attitude. This, and what missions the player chose, would change how the characters would act and be perceived in the game. For example, if players wanted to be bad, many civilians wouldn't want to deal with them. As wrote to us by Chris, a collector that was able to gain all the different revisions of the game: “The earliest revisions of the game were the most ambitious ones of all! Ken and the other 5 had visions of the game being like 50 square miles of New San Francisco. It was getting too ambitious they found out by around Rev. 7 or Rev. 10 because the size of the thing was getting out of hand really. They had exploring the sewers and other things in there along with the streets and buildings. The size of NSF was cut down two or three times <to save space> to a final one of about 8 square miles by Rev. 23. It is actually Rev. 24, because there were 2 different versions of Rev. 17 burnt up by Ken to show Jack, Sam, Leonard and Gerry <Gary?> that they were meeting a milestone on it, possibly the shareholders, too! The last Rev. 23 CD was burnt by Ken on 10/5/95 at 15:30 hrs <3:30PM> that afternoon. Ken always wrote on the CD what work had been completed on each version. The last one says "Cinepak work". That was additional video being added or

being tweaked / edited on it. That was very nearly the last day of the project, according to Ken. Leonard walked in on all of them while they were doing their daily routines of coding, art and such on this on Oct. 10th or 12th and told them it was over and they had to pack their personal stuff up. He watched them as they packed and searched each of them before they went out the door to see if they had items of BI/WN <or other Atari property> on them before they left. BI/WN was a dead project and forgotten. Atari was nearly dead, as well. Coders and others either quit or were laid off or fired in those days. A sad time for Jag and Atari and the Jag fans." As the Atari Jaguar began to fail, more simple projects like Bubsy and NBA Jam were allowed to go on while more complex projects like Black Ice / White Noise were cut. The game was about 80% done when it was cut, according to Faran Thomason. There are actually three prototypes of the game you can find online. Revisions 18, 19, and 23. Revision 18 is the earliest and most stable, and 23 is the latest and least stable. None of the revisions have an in-game soundtrack, but you can also find the soundtrack online as a stand-alone album. A fun fact about the game is there were negotiations to have the popular band Nine Inch Nails make the soundtrack for the game, but these negotiations fell through due to Atari offering very low pay. Instead, the soundtrack was done by composer Andy Armer. Also, the movie studio that filmed the in-game characters were interested in making a movie adaptation. However, these negotiations fell through due to Atari asking for too much money.



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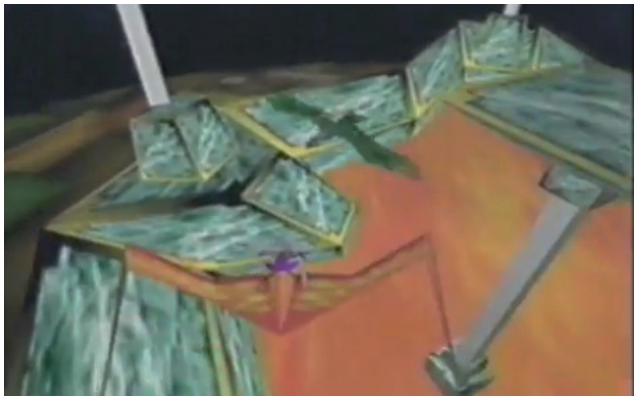
DACTYL JOUST

Article by: Sam Batten

Dactyl Joust was a game being developed for the Atari Jaguar by High Voltage Software. It was listed to be released in 1995 as a cart game. This was to be a new version of the ever popular arcade game that was released in 1982 and developed by Williams Electronics. The original Joust was a 2D game where the player controlled a knight riding a flying ostrich, and to progress through levels would have to defeat other knights riding buzzards. Bill Rehbock, Atari's Vice President of software business development at the time is quoted saying: "Dactyl Joust will bring the classic game alive as a first person perspective, fully texture-mapped Joust in a realistic, three dimensional environment. Atari will market these games for the 64-bit Jaguar system while Williams Entertainment will license and market them for high performance PCs"

Otherwise there is very little information about this game although one programmer who wanted to remain anonymous has spoken about its development. This programmer has said that Dactyl Joust most certainly existed but it was far from finished, and at the time of development the game had one arena that the player could fly around. While doing this the player could lance things as is common in joust games and could also use the Dactyls fireball. He also said that there was some simple AI meaning that there were probably enemies that the player could fight within the arena. There is also a very short video of Dactyl Joust that has



been released on YouTube and the game looks to be running very smoothly. It shows what looks like could be the arena described by the programmer and also shows two different Dactyls, which has a little character in armor holding a joust sat on top. One controlled by the player and another that looks to be AI controlled. The art style looks very much like a 64 bit game and would not look out of place if it had been released on the N64. Why the game was never released seems quite simple in this case, the game was meant to still be at least six months from completion. Anyone that could have continued paying for development wanted to move on and spend their money developing for the new emerging console: the PlayStation. This led to Dactyl Joust and another game called TRF (a Mortal Kombat style fighting game) being shelved. High Voltage Software is still developing games today and has worked on games like the new Mortal Kombat, Injustice: Gods Among Us and Saints Row IV: Gat out of Hell.

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LEGIONS OF THE UNDEAD

Article by: Jade Avis

Legions of the Undead was a game developed by Rebellion Developments for the Atari Jaguar console. It is unknown when this game was due to be released, but there was a small preview in Ultimate Magazine in 1994, so it was speculated to release around the following year. Not much is known about the game – even today – apart from that it would be a first-person dungeon crawler. An interview in 1994 with Rebellion's creative director / CEO Jason Kingsley revealed that: "[Legions of the Undead] will be using a significantly enhanced version of the Alien vs. Predator engine, and the gameplay will be changed to make it more like an Action RPG or adventure. There'll be weapons to collect, puzzles to solve, and traditional RPG elements to give the game depth. It basically follows on from the old text adventures, but obviously you'll be able to see exactly what you're doing! We're hoping to do a 24 meg version and a CD version."

A few screenshots of the game were released, showing very detailed dungeon environments and even some of the enemies that the player would encounter. These included a scorpion-like creature, an insect-looking monster with a huge eye towering on its head, and even something that looked similar to xenomorph from the Alien series. The company developed an Alien vs. Predator game for the Jaguar in 1994, so inspiration for this creature may

have come from the company's previous work. Rebellion were saying that work on Legions of the Undead had been delayed whilst they finished AVP, but hoped game would come on a 24 MEG Cartridge on Jaguar CD. The CD version would have been huge, 100's of levels, endless new graphics and a massive, massive challenge. Unfortunately, that never happened.

It is uncertain why Legions of the Undead was never released, though many speculate it was due to Andrew Whittaker, a programmer at Rebellion, being pulled from the production due to his inclusion in the development of Alien vs. Predator for PC, which wasn't released until 1999. The commercial failure of the Jaguar could also have contributed to the team switching resources to more profitable platforms. Rebellion was founded by brothers Jason and Chris Kingsley in 1992, and as of 2015 have 250 members of staff. As previously mentioned, Rebellion is perhaps best known for their work on the Alien vs. Predator games, as well as Skyhammer, Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death, Call of Duty: World at War – Final Fronts, NeverDead, and the Sniper Elite series. As of early 2016, they are working on Battlezone for PS4 and PC.

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PHASE ZERO

Article by: Sam Batten

Phase Zero, also known as Hover Hunter, was a 3D shooter game in development for the Atari Jaguar by Hyper Image Productions and it was due to be released in October 1995. Phase Zero was also Hyper Image Productions first game that they were developing as a company. In an interview in 1995 via IRC chat, Hyper Image Productions stated they were only working on this title and no others. Phase Zero was described by the developers as a networkable hovertank combat simulator and the game play would be from a first person perspective. The player would traverse different landscapes and engage in strategic combat. Some of the scenery such as trees would also be destructible. One of the most interesting features of the game was that it was going to have local networking, allowing people to get together and fight it out with multiple Jaguar consoles and TVs, unfortunately this was never utilized. The game was ultimately dropped by Atari and so it was never completed. There is however, a leaked version of the game that can be played on a modded Atari Jaguar by using a flash Cart. This version is not complete but still allows players to experience a lot of the core mechanics. There is no music in the dump which during an interview the developers were very excited about, so it is a shame that it has not made it on to this leaked version. For an unfinished prototype the game plays smoothly, but there are only five missions that gamers can play before it hangs up. There is a way to play a few more unfinished levels which was discovered by Clint Thompson from jagcube.atari.org, although he notes that these cannot be completed. Hyper Image Productions eventually closed for reasons unknown, and there is almost no information on if they released any game. After Atari they were licensed with Sony and 3DO but as far as we know they never released anything and soon vanished forever.

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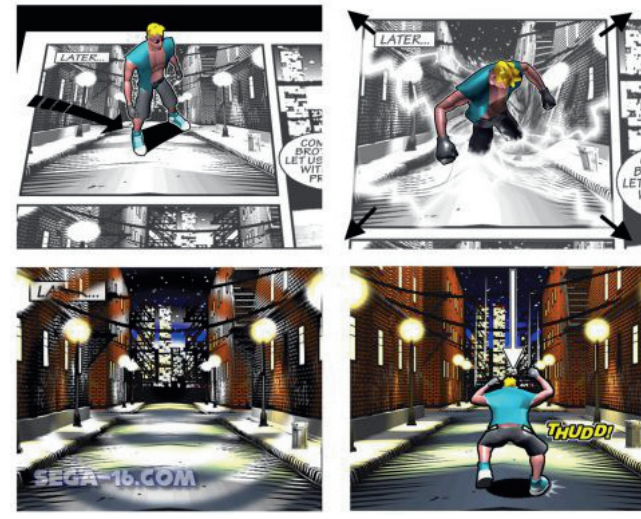
Sega Saturn

Article by: Damiano Bacci (Blek)

The Sega Saturn is the official successor to the Sega Mega Drive / Genesis and was Sega's flagship console during the fifth generation of consoles, which marked the evolution of the industry into modern 3D gaming and where the enormous success of the Playstation profoundly shaped the market and its competitors. Prior to the Saturn, Sega had a significant share of the 16-bit gaming market, thanks to aggressive advertising campaigns and smart marketing moves for the Genesis, coupled with a great library of 3rd party titles aimed at a more mature audience. What followed up however, was confusion and bad decision-making that ultimately provided a shaky ground for the Saturn launch. The releases of the Sega Mega CD and 32X add-ons were met with timid reactions from the public and 3rd party developers, poor hardware design and a weak bunch of launch titles of course didn't help. The 32X especially was designed as a stop-gap to prolong the lifespan of the Genesis, thus contributing to the overall confusion of 3rd party developers, uncertain of which platform was better to focus. The Saturn was released on November 1994 in Japan, May 1995 in North America, and finally July 1995 in Europe. Unfortunately the Saturn was known for its complex hardware architecture, making really difficult for programmers to develop software for the system, and to utilize its full capabilities. With multiple CPUs, graphic chips and different technical parts, the console was not even cheap to produce and at the same time the graphical results did not have any major advances against its main competitors. The decision to ship the Saturn prior to the launch of the Playstation didn't provide the console with a good lineup of launch titles, despite the initial success in Japan thanks to an arcade port of Virtua Fighter, the Saturn did not manage to replicate the Genesis' success. At launch in USA the Saturn shipped with a price tag of 399$, way higher than the Playstation's 299$. The Saturn ended up selling 1.8 million units in USA, 5.75 million in Japan and only 1 million in Europe, paling numbers in comparison to Nintendo 64 and Playstation. However, despite its "commercial failure", the Saturn still has its place in the heart of many video-game fans. The system was known for its amazing near-perfect arcade ports, like the Virtua Fighter series, Sega Rally Championship (1995), Daytona USA (1995), Virtua Cop (1995), Cyber Troopers Virtual-On (1996), Last Bronx (1997), Manx TT Super Bike (1997), Marvel Super Heroes (1997), The House of the Dead (1998) and Radiant Silvergun (1998). Virtua Fighter 2, Sega Rally, Virtua Cop and Daytona are the only titles that cracked the 1 million mark for copies sold. It's easy to see how such a low number of sales was not a good sign for Sega. Other classic and high rated Saturn titles include Clockwork Knight (1994), Panzer Dragoon (1995), Astal (1995), Bug! (1995), Magic Knight Rayearth (1995), NiGHTS into Dreams (1996), Sakura Taisen (1996), Powerslave / Exhumed (1996), Dark Savior (1996), The Legend of Oasis (1996), Albert Odyssey: Legend of Eldean (1996), Dragon Force (1996), Shining the Holy Ark (1996), Saturn Bomberman (1997), Grandia (1997), Guardian Heroes (1997), Mr. Bones (1997), Amok (1997), Sonic R (1997), Dead or Alive (1997), Enemy Zero (1997), Shining Force III (1997), Fighters Megamix (1997), Princess Crown (1997), Panzer Dragoon Saga (1998), Burning Rangers (1998) and Final Fight Revenge (2000). In the end there were more than 1.000 games released for the console, but that was not enough to win the 32 bit console war. As you probably guessed, one of the Saturn's major weakness in its gaming department was the lack of a flagship Sonic title. Sega fans only got Sonic R, a racing game, Sonic 3D Blast, a remake of the Genesis title, and Sonic Jam, one of the first compilations of Sonic games. Sega was working on a new 3D Sonic game titled "Sonic X-Treme", but the project had a long story of troubled development and it was never completed. As for similar "failed" consoles, this was not the only cancelled game planned for the Saturn: many studios had high hopes for Sega's 32 bit console and a long list of interesting titles that were once in development and never saw the light of day in the end. While in Europe and America the console was far behind sales of Playstation and Nintendo 64, in Japan the Saturn had its own good number of fans and that's probably the reason why many of the games canned for the console were from Japanese developers. Unfortunately this means that it's harder to gather first-hand info on these lost titles, with details hidden away in old Japanese magazines and memories that will be forgotten without any practical way to locate and contact their developers. In the following pages we'll have a quick look at some of the most interesting and curious games we'll never play on the Sega Saturn.

COMIX ZONE 3D

Article by: Tristan Avery



Comix Zone is a stylish side scrolling beat 'em up / action-adventure game that was released for the Sega Genesis / Mega Drive in 1995 and was designed by Peter Morawiec and programmed by Adrian Stephens. The game follows Sketch Turner, a down and out comic book artist who gets magically pulled into his own comic by its villain, Mortus, and must now fight his way through Mortus' drawn monstrosities in order to escape. What made the game unique is that the levels themselves are set up like a comic book and the player must tear his way through the panel walls in order to progress. This aspect could also be utilized to create shortcuts and find hidden power-ups by tearing away the backs of the panels. The game was created after the duo finished working on Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and Sonic Spinball at the Sega Technical Institute, which was an American based development division of Sega that allowed up and coming developers relative freedom to work on new IPs for Sega. Morawiec cited his inspiration for Comix Zone came from his frequent trips to the comic book store with his co-workers, and the initial demo he had created for the game was received very well. While the game was a critical success, it unfortunately did poor financially due to it being released concurrently with the Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation. This is one of the reasons that the 3D Sega Saturn sequel Morawiec had in mind never got past the initial planning phase, with only a few 3D models as proof of its existence. He also stated that at the time the popularity of comics was declining and that "..most people would much rather pretend being a real comic book hero, as opposed to being one on paper". This was the end for another interesting Saturn game that will never be. Morawiec and Stephens would eventually go on to leave Sega and found their own company, Luxoflux games, which is known for the Vigilante 8 and True Crime series. After Luxoflux was disbanded by Activision, they would found another company named Isopod Labs, which specializes in mobile games such as Vigilante 8 Arcade and Keep of My Hill: Journals of the Apocalypse.

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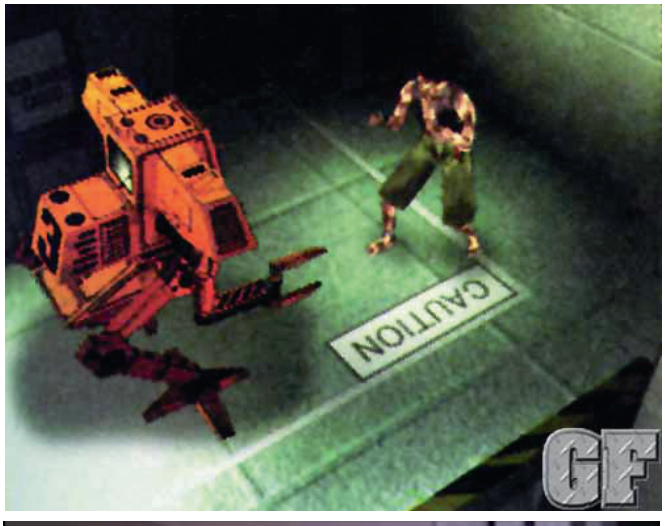
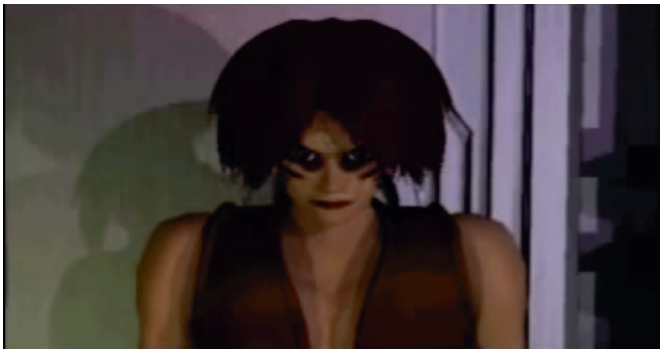
FAKE DOWN

Article by: Roberto Tunon

In retrospect, it is interesting to see how some genres become representatives of a gaming era, such as how most 2D platformers on the 8 bits followed the bases of Super Mario Bros or how 1 vs. 1 fighters built on top of Street Fighter II's formula. Going all the way back to the mid-90's and the 32/64-bit console generation, nobody can deny the popularity level survival horror games reached. The formula introduced by Infogrames with the first Alone in the Dark was greatly expanded and perfected by a talented CAPCOM team commanded by Shinji Mikami, delivering the first Resident Evil and laying the foundation for what was about to come next. The systems of that time, especially the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn, were quite prolific in the survival horror genre and brought us games such as Dino Crisis, which took a prominent turn to the direct action with its second entry, or the original Silent Hill, creating a beloved franchise that focuses on the most psychological side of terror. In particular, the Saturn, despite being overshadowed by the massive success of





the original PlayStation, also had its own share of suspense and horror games appealing to different audiences. Most of those fell into the category of point-and-click adventures such as D (originally released for the 3DO and later ported to PlayStation, Saturn and PC), Dark Seed or exclusives such as Torico (known as Lunacy in the US) or The Mansion of Hidden Souls, sequel to a previous Mega-CD title. It would not be until almost the end of the commercial life of the Saturn (at least in the west, where the system had a shorter lifespan than in Japan) that Sega would release its own take on the "golden age survival horror" formula with Deep Fear (unreleased in the United States). Tokyo-based developer System Sacom had been notorious in its home country for producing games for Japanese computers of the 80's such as the X68000, FM-TOWNS, or the NEC PC-8801 and PC-9801, being particularly committed with the novel genre and greatly influencing future visual novels from other developers. In the 90's, System Sacom switched its development efforts to the blooming business of the home consoles and developed several games for the Sega Mega Drive and the CD add-on for the Super Nintendo. It is worth mentioning that most of their games would never leave Japan, although there were some exceptions such as the tennis game Grand Slam for the Sega Mega Drive (renamed Jennifer Capriati Tennis in the US and Grandslam: The Tennis Tournament in Europe) and the Mega-CD title Yumemi Yataki no Monogatari (adapted in the US as Mansion of Hidden Souls and in Europe as Yumemi Mystery Mansion), a point-and-click adventure with full motion video cut-scenes and offering compatibility with the Sega Mouse. With the advent of the 32-bit systems around 1994, System Sacom started developing games for the Saturn, PlayStation and even for the failed NEC 3DO. Despite experimenting with different genres, the point-and-click-style adventure with extensive use of FMV scenes was the studio's preferred approach; however many of their games still remained as Japan-only releases. In 1996, System Sacom started the development of Fake Down, an action and survival horror game with polygonal characters and pre-rendered backgrounds following a trend that had become notably popular in that generation, which pursued to economize the on-screen polygon count while still being able to present detailed backgrounds and big, well-animated characters. Although the information available is limited and all the video footage seems to belong to early development stages, from the few scans and magazine information released at that time we know that the popular manga artist and creator of the Akira series, Katsuhiro Otomo, was responsible for the game's character designs. The game's main character is a young boy of unknown name and origins, who wakes up after reportedly having undergone genetic modification, allowing him to transform into a powerful fighter (articles from the time in fact claim that the boy "is able to transform into 3 different forms") and combat an evil race simply called "The Fakers", a cross between robots and other monstrosities supposedly born from the mutation of the human race after being in contact with a

strange virus. The development team was making use of motion capture techniques for character animation, which together with the numerous FMV videos, strove to provide a cinematic experience. From the scarce media available, it is difficult not to see a slight similarity between Fake Down and Biohazard 2 / Resident Evil 2, the former's rooms and corridors bearing a reasonable resemblance to sections of CAPCOM's game, such as the marshalling yard or the laboratory. However, Resident Evil 2 would not be released on PlayStation until January 1998 in Japan so this likeness seems to be fortuitous. After all, dark and industrial settings were common bets for survival horror games at that time. What really could have set Fake Down apart from most of its competitors was the focus on action and particularly on hand-to-hand combat. The main character fights his enemies, including a kind of giant centipede-like creature, by means of rapid punch combinations while also blocking enemies' attacks, slightly pointing the game's action sequences in the direction of other beat 'em up games such as Dynamite Deka / Die Hard Arcade. The amount of accessible material does not really help to discard completely the usage of firearms in the game, but the emphasis on the main character's transformations seems to rule out this possibility. Whether the gameplay would have been linear or more puzzle centric and backtracking-oriented is also unknown. The reason for the cancellation of Fake Down is still not clear at this point, and it could be related to the tough competition on the market. But we do know that System Sacom was also helping Sega's internal team AM7 to develop the already mentioned Deep Fear. Because of this, it does seem feasible that System Sacom could have switched its efforts into helping Sega to develop their survival horror and eventually ended up canning Fake Down. In 1998 and after releasing two more Japan-only adventure games for the PlayStation, System Sacom would cease its efforts in game development and switch to the electronic devices business. Because of the overwhelming success of the PlayStation, most third-party developers eventually focused on Sony's machine during the 32/64-bit generation, only trying their luck with Survival Horror titles on Nintendo 64 in some punctual cases such as CAPCOM's notorious port of Resident Evil 2 or the very first version of Resident Evil Zero, whose production would be later moved to the Nintendo GameCube. It is for that reason that cancellations such as Fake Down's are especially disappointing, as it could have established an interesting alternative for Sega's 32-bit system library, providing an attractive mix of action and horror like nobody else offered on the system.

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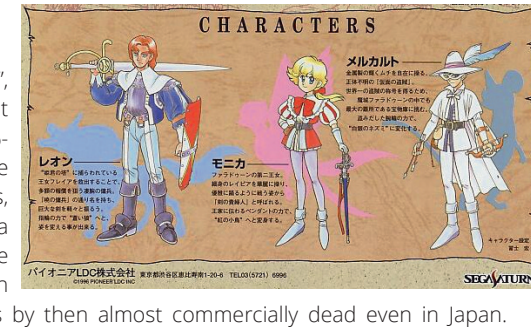
MONIKA NO SHIRO (FARADOON)

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



Originally titled "Faradoon: The Legend of Dragon Castle", Monika No Shiro (Monika's Castle) is an action RPG that was in development for Sega Saturn in the years 1996-1998 at Pioneer LDC, a production company known in the west only for a few laser-active titles like Quiz Econosaurs, Ghost Rush!, and Manhattan Requiem. First slated for a spring 1997 release, and then delayed to march 1998, the game was cancelled shortly after the latter date, though nearly finished, probably because the Sega Saturn was by then almost commercially dead even in Japan.

Apparently, Faradoon was playable at Tokyo Game Show Spring 1998, but we currently don't have any video proof of its supposed presence at the show. The basic plot of the title was pretty standard fare: the evil magician Mitridates conquered the pacific Faradoon realm and transformed the kingdom's castle into a labyrinth full of deadly traps and powerful monsters. However, the game's beginning and the unfolding of the main events changed accordingly to the character selected (the player could choose between the princess Monika, a mercenary called Leon, and the masked thief Melcart), with the true ending only obtainable by finishing the game with all three protagonists. Each one of them had also different attack power, speed and hit range. But the main novelty of Faradoon was that, by stepping on a "magic circle" on the floor, Monika, Leon and Melcart could transform respectively in a Bird, a Wolf and a Rat. These forms gave the character new abilities: for example, the bird could fly over the various traps. Nevertheless, our avatar would remain transformed only for a short period of time, and during this period saving was disabled. Every character also had a charged attack at their disposal and could execute a fast combo by repeatedly pressing the attack button. By equipping a wand, moreover, the protagonists got the ability to cast offensive and recovery spells. Lastly, Monika No Shiro featured a CG intro, famous voice actors, and, for the first time on Saturn (at least according to a promotional video), locations were made with 256 colour polygons. After cancelling Faradoon, Pioneer LDC went to release a few Japan-only PlayStation titles such as Serial Experiments Lain and Bounty Sword. In 2003, the production company was bought out by advertising and marketing company firm Dentsu.

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MONSTER MAKER: HOLY DAGGER

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Monster Maker: Holy Dagger is a tactical RPG created by NEC Interchannel that was slated for release in late 1998 for Sega Saturn. Planned to be the new chapter in the long-running Monster Maker series of card-based titles, Holy Dagger was ultimately cancelled after a lengthy and troubled development. According to Interchannel producer Takashi Ozama, the development team had to scrap their original plan to use polygons for the game characters, because they realized that 3D models didn't do justice to the peculiar style of character designer Kugatsu Hime. However, creating and animating 2D sprites and ensuring that they didn't look out of place in fully 3D

environments was a time-consuming process. Also, a few staff members had to be replaced, causing further delays, which likely caused the projects cancellation, as by the end of 1998, the Saturn was commercially dying - Even in Japan. Holy Dagger's story, set in the great continent of Wolflend, begins while Eios, prince of the Zoraria's Kingdom, and his cousin the archduke McDuff, are both away from home for studying. They are informed that Eios' fiancee, princess Maria, is in danger because an horde of orcs has invaded her realm, the kingdom of Makeonia. However, on the travel back to their country, the two nobleman are attacked by a mysterious band of thieves. This was just the beginning of an epic struggle between the forces of light and those of darkness. Other than the three main protagonists debuting in this instalment, Holy dagger's large cast was going to include many returning characters from previous Monster Maker entries: Lorien, a tomboy elf; Diane, an axe-wielding warrior; Lufiea, a shy apprentice fire mage; Vishnus, a blind seer expert in curative magic; the brave prince of the elves and master of the box, Elcyth; Milliene, a gorgeous warrior; Shana of the cat-like Sharze race; Mary, a thief; Sarah, a friend of Elcyth; Drone, one of three "sisters of darkness"; and the powerful witch Diosherill, a recurring main villain of the series. Moreover, three new opponents, Zolges, Ostwald, and Grad, the orc king, were planned to debut in Holy Dagger. During turn-based battles, players had to confront common enemies such as Slimes, Skeletons, Lizardmen (creatures that were low on intelligence but expert sword wielders), four different types of Orcs (Soldier, Armour, Archer, Mage), Golems (tough enemies with high defence), Minotarus (beasts that use very strong attacks), Dragons (who can breathe fire and fly). In battle, each playable character could perform four basic commands: Attack, Magic, Items and Special Skills. Each character has their own stats that influenced how they played - For example, the Quickness stat of a dictated how many times a unit could act during a turn. Even the character's height was important; for example, while a short unit had the ability to go through a small passage, a tall one could reach higher points of the map. Environments themselves featured an high degree of interactivity: Aside from defeating enemies, in order to finish a mission there was also a degree of puzzle-solving as well as activating and disabling traps, finding hidden passages (like the one behind a waterfall visible in an artwork), use the terrain to gain an advantage (In a screenshot caption, published in a japanese magazine, it is suggested that was even possible to burn trees, while in another screenshot you can see a bridge that could be lowered or raised). Being polygonal, the camera could be freely rotated or used to look at the action from above. Planned areas included a town, a ship, a fortress, a forest and a waterfall. In between missions, players were trated to cutscenes and were also able to buy better gear for their party. Other Monster Maker games had also been affected by cancellation. In 1995, NEC Interchannel had already cancelled Monster Maker: Arc of the Gods for Turbo CD, which was supposed to be a direct sequel of Monster Maker: Yami no Ryukishi, released in 1994 for the same NEC platform. After the company was purchased by Index Corporation in 2004, NEC Interchannel finally closed down in 2013.

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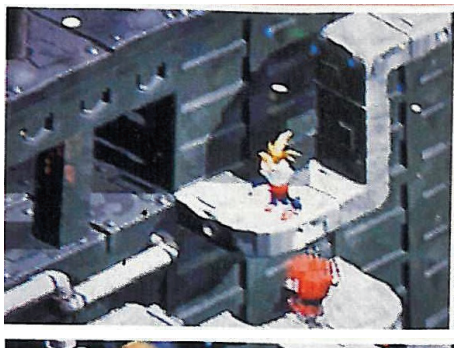
ROCKET BOY

Article by: Nicolas Dunai, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Rocket Boy is a canceled platform game that was in development for the Sega Saturn by Rocket Science Games (the team behind less known titles such as Cadillacs and Dinosaurs: The Second Cataclysm and Rocket Jockey), using pre-rendered graphic and an isometric point of view, much like Sonic 3D Blast. The game was initially in development for the Sega 32X and Sega / Mega CD addons before transitioning to the Saturn. While moving the project to the more powerful console meant Rocket Science could do so much more with their game, it also led to the game's eventual on hold status and following cancellation. In an interview with Wired magazine in 1995, Rocket Science mentioned seeing many similar platform games at the Consumer Electronics Show and gave that as reason for stop working on Rocket Boy as well as canceling another project named "Dark Ride" (a weird on-rail shooter). While Rocket Boy could have been an impressive game on the 16 bit consoles, it would have looked like an average platformer on the Saturn. In the end Rocket Science closed it's doors in 1997 due to financial problems. Their last 3 games were published by SegaSoft (a joint venture between Sega of America and CSK), but none sold exceptionally well, which made it harder for the studio to receive new funding. The main Venture Capitalists that invested in the company decided to stop giving them money. As former CEO of Rocket Science wrote on his website: "We raised $35 million and after 18 months made the cover of Wired magazine. The press called Rocket Science one of the hottest companies in Silicon Valley and predicted that our games would be great because the storyboards and trailers were spectacular. 90 days later, I found out our games are terrible, no one is buying them, our best engineers started leaving, and with 120 people and a huge burn rate, we're running out of money and about to crash. [...] "Steve, we thought we'd tell you this before the board meeting, but both our firms are going to pass on leading your next round." I was speechless. I felt like I had just been kicked in the gut and stabbed in the back These were my lead investors. It was the ultimate vote of no confidence. If they passed the odds of anyone in the entire country funding us was zero." This would eventually become Rocket Science's downfall as they could no longer continue game development to keep their doors open. Just a year before Rocket Science Games were working with CyberCash Inc. to develop some kind of online "virtual arcade" in which people could choose games to play by using a micropayments system: "CyberCash, Inc., a leading developer of secure Internet payment solutions, and Rocket Science Games, an innovator in the development of next-generation interactive entertainment software, today announced plans to co-develop technology for interactive pay-as-you-play Internet transactions. CyberCash and Rocket Science are working to create electronic coin services, which enable secure payments of less than $10, for computer game play on the Internet. The joint project will advance development of CyberCash's electronic coin service for micropayments on the Internet, which is expected to be available for commercial use in the second half of 1996. Developing technology for Internet game play payments will help Rocket Science to design a Virtual Arcade with innovative platforms and creative options for Internet computer game players." While this partnership may have never materialized, SegaSoft would partner with CyberCash after Rocket Science's closure to create Heat.net, a system to host online games, which was later bought by GameSpy. After Rocket



Science Game's closure, some of its members would spread out into other ventures. Founder and CEO of RSG, Steve Blank would launch E.piphany a developer for customer relationship software and in 2015 host a radio show about entrepreneurship. Will Harvey, one of the chief technical architects at RSG would go on to develop social services. These would include There, which could be compared to Second Life (both of which released in 2003) as well as IMVU a chat service, which Harvey would launch the following year. After working for 15 years at Pixar on such popular movies as A Bug's Life, Toy Story 2 and WALL-E, other than a few years at indie gaming studio Dynamighty, since January 2015 Rocket Boy's Art Director Mark Cordell Holmes is working at Google in their Doodle team.

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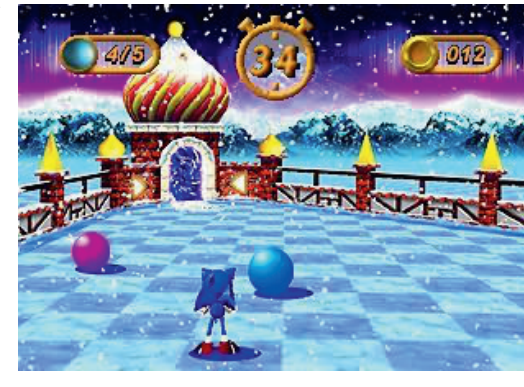
SONIC SATURN

Article by: Brandon Funai, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Sonic Saturn is another lost Sonic game that was in development by Sega Technical Institute around the same time as the more known Sonic X-treme. The STI team was composed of many talented developers that worked on such games as Sonic Spinball, Kid Chameleon, Die Hard Arcade, Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and Comix Zone, and in the mid '90s, they started to work on different prototypes for new 3D games to develop on the Sega Saturn. Simply known as "Sonic Saturn", the project seems to have mainly been a one-man prototype lead by Peter Morawiec, who coded a great looking (at the time) 3D engine and experimented with basic movements and animations for what would have been one of the first 3D models for Sonic. Morawiec worked at STI from March 1992 to December 1996, creating the special stages for Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and helping with the development of Comix Zone and Sonic Spinball (other than the unreleased Sonic-16, another scrapped Sonic game based on the Saturday Morning TV show). There's only a single mockup image that shows how Sonic Saturn could have been played, with a 3D world composed of different bridges that would have permitted Sonic to run at full speed "on-rails" without worrying about a free roaming area. Unfortunately, this is only an assumption as there are no in-game screenshots from such a level. A few screenshots from the "Sonic Pool" bonus rounds planned for the game were leaked online, showing some kind of billiard in which Sonic had to spin-dash balls into a portal, collecting rings and defeating enemies along the way. After hitting the ball, the camera would switch into an overhead view to show where it was going. The farther you went into the special stages, the more they ramped up in difficulty by adding more enemies and increasing the amount of balls, similar to the special stages from 16-bit Sonic games. Peter stated in an interview that Yuji Naka did not like what he saw from the Sonic Saturn prototype so they had to drop the project early in development. When STI were given the task to make a special stage for the Saturn port of Sonic 3D Blast they initially thought to use Sonic Pool, but due to time restraints, they simply decided to do a 3D remake of the classic Sonic 2 bonus stages. After the cancellation of their main game, the legendary Sonic X-treme, STI was

closed down and merged back into Sega of America, taking all the scraps of Sonic Saturn down with them. As for Peter Morawiec, after his little adventure with SEGA, he worked with a couple of other game studios like Activision, but now he is a Front End Web Developer for TrueCar Inc. His last known work in video games was as Lead Project Manager for Isopod labs, an indie game dev studio that released a few digital games for console and iOS.

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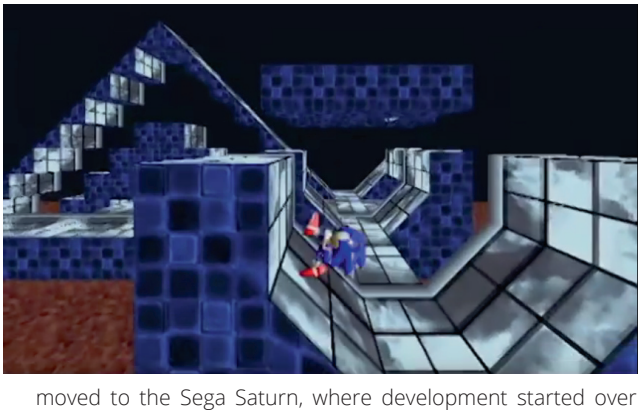
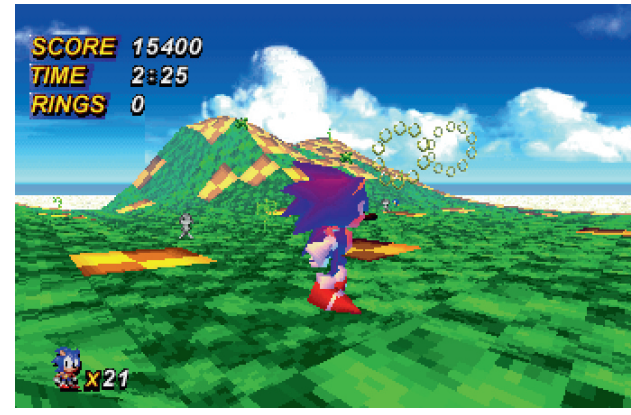
SONIC X-TREME



Article by: Jeff Wheaton

The Sega Genesis had been a wildly successful console for Sega, but sales were starting to slow compared to the Super Nintendo. Sega attempted to keep it alive with the release of two add-on systems, but they ultimately didn't do much to help. It was time for a successor, and the Sega Saturn was just that. Sega wanted a Sonic game for the new console, and decided to move an unfinished project for the Sega Genesis's 32X add-on to the Saturn. This project, at the time, was known as Sonic Mars, but would eventually come to be known as Sonic X-Treme. Sonic X-Treme was to be a platformer game, similar in gameplay to previous side-scrolling Sonic the Hedgehog games. Now, however, Sonic would be able to walk forwards and backwards in addition to moving left and right. The overall movement mechanics of Sonic were not dissimilar to those seen in the canceled Sonic Mars project, but the level design for Sonic X-Treme would have been significantly more vertically focused, as opposed to Sonic Mars, which had a very flat, tile-based, level design style. To further add a sense of depth to the game, a fish-eye lens filter was applied to the game's camera to make every level look like a sphere. Additionally, certain parts of levels would allow the player to flip the environment to a new rotation, allowing Sonic to run on walls and ceilings. Michael Kosaka was the project lead on Sonic Mars throughout its development, but internal disputes between him and higher-ups within Sega near the end of the 32X's lifespan led to his resignation. Chris Senn, one of the programmers on the project, was promoted to replace him. From here, the game was moved to the Sega Saturn, where development started over from scratch. Mike Wallis, a Sega of America

developer who was partially overseeing the project, split development into two teams to help optimize work. The first team, led by Chris Senn and fellow programmer Ofer Alon, would focus on level design and art assets. Meanwhile, the other team, led by programmer Chris Coffin, would focus on creating the engine and programming the game's boss battles. Unfortunately, the teams both suffered from poor communication between each other; levels would go into development before they were approved by a designer, and designers would have nothing to do while they waited for programmers to finish coding certain elements of the game. Sonic X-Treme's engine development started on the Macintosh platform. After this, it was ported over to Windows. However, when the team tried porting the engine over to the Sega Saturn, numerous performance issues arose to the point where the game's maximum framerate at any given time was less than five frames per second. In response to this, Sega outsourced work for the Sega Saturn version of the engine to a company known as Point of View (the team behind the Saturn conversion of Mortal Kombat Trilogy and Rampage World Tour, other than a lot of tie-in and sport games). This company would work to resolve the numerous technical issues with this version of the engine to present to multiple high-ranking Sega officials from Japan, including then-president Hayao Nakayama. Unfortunately, Point of View faced many of the same issues that the internal Sega team had faced in porting the engine to the Sega Saturn. Two of their demos have since been leaked, one of which exhibits stuttering animations and an abysmally low framerate. By the time Sega of Japan's staff arrived to view a demo of the project, Point of View showed a mostly broken presentation of the Saturn engine first. In response, Nakayama grew furious, and left the building before a much more stable version of the game running on Windows could be shown. The first leaked Point of View demo is likely from around this period. However, the other leaked demo from Point of View is much more stable, featuring fully functional animations, the abilities to be damaged and to defeat enemies, along with the beginnings of an in-engine level editor. Though it should be noted that this later build of the game seems to be a different one than Sega's own Sonic X-Treme (so much that the title was written as Extreme), with a more traditional multi-layered 2.5D side scrolling level, a new Sonic sprite and also lacking the game's signature fish-eye lens. Following this meeting, the future of Sonic X-Treme looked grim. Chris Coffin was made lead programmer on the project, and Mike Wallis got into contact with Bernie Stolar, who had just been appointed as CEO of Sega of America. He requested the use of the game engine used to create NiGHTS Into Dreams, hoping that the Sonic X-Treme developers would be able to speed up development by utilizing the engine's tools, which were already optimized for the Sega Saturn. This did help the team significantly, as they were able to borrow many elements from NiGHTS Into Dreams which were already fully functional in the engine. In a short time, the team developed a prototype that would be known as Project Condor, which featured a more traditional and open 3D world, more similar to what would eventually be seen in Sonic Adventure, as opposed to Sonic X-Treme's 2.5D fish-eye lens style of gameplay. An early playable prototype of



Sonic Project Condor was leaked online some years ago, but it's still unclear if this version uses any code from the Nights engine or if it was just an evolution of Chris Coffin's 3D boss engine. The legend says that unfortunately the NiGHTS Into Dreams engine had been given to the X-Treme team without the consent of NiGHTS and Sonic creator Yuji Naka. The Sonic X-Treme team was forced to abandon all work on the Project Condor prototype after Naka discovered the project's existence, and threatened to quit. The team had to start over once again, and Chris Coffin began working non-stop, practically living out of his office, to restart the whole game from scratch using the boss engine. As a result, Chris came down with pneumonia, and had to abandon the project. This led to Mike Wallis informing the higher-ups that the game would not be completed in time for the 1996 Christmas season. Shortly following this, the game was officially canceled, and was replaced on Sega's release schedule for Saturn games with a remake of the Sega Genesis game Sonic 3D. Marketing funds for Sonic X-Treme were also reallocated at this point for Nights Into Dreams, which would go on to be the Saturn's best-selling title that coming holiday season. Even though Sonic X-Treme had been officially canceled, Chris Senn and Ofer Alon continued working on the game's engine and art assets. Not wanting to abandon all of the work they had accomplished on the project to this point, they created a presentation to show to Sega of America's PC division, in the hopes that a much more stable Windows version could see a release. While the presentation ran smoothly and as expected, Sega of America's PC division wanted to focus on porting pre-existing Sonic games, such as Sonic R, to the Windows platform. Sonic X-Treme was turned down, and was finally laid to rest. Many years later, some of the ideas behind Sonic X-Treme would be used for Sonic Lost World on the Wii U in 2013. Sonic Lost World featured spheroid-style levels much like Sonic X-Treme's level design. Additionally, Chris Senn would return to the Sonic the Hedgehog franchise in 2014 with Sonic Boom: Rise of Lyric on Wii U.

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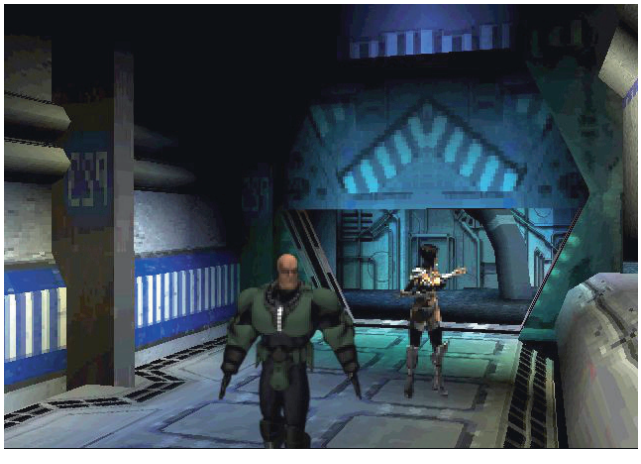
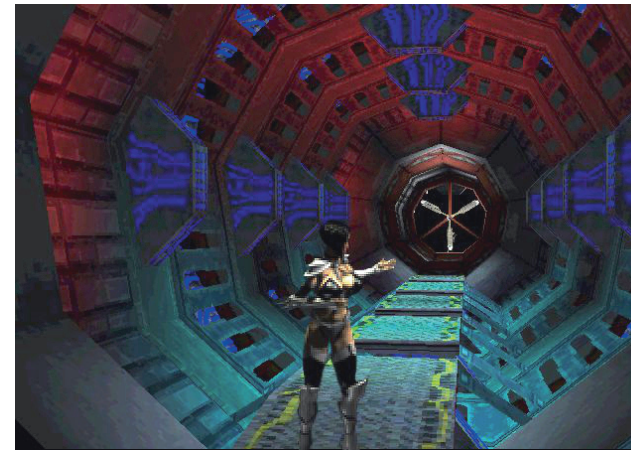


Article by: Nicolas Dunai

Developed by the late Scavenger Inc., who were primarily known for publishing the work of developers Zyrinx, Lemon, and Triton, Terminus was a cancelled action game for the Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation, and PC. It was announced in 1996 at the Electronics Entertainment Expo (E3) and advertised in press releases as a game that would "Give Tomb Raider a run for it's money." Scavenger and its development teams were known for making the most out of consoles, as seen with games developed by Zyrinx for the Sega Genesis/Mega Drive such as Sub-Terrania, Red Zone, and even a tech demo made to showcase the Sega 32X. Terminus was no different, using NURBS (Non-Uniform Rational B-Splines), which would allow for rounder, more curved models than standard polygons would allow for. At a glance, Terminus appeared to be a game shrouded in a cyberpunk art style, with characters wearing fetishistic leather and rubber clothing, while donning extreme haircuts. It was a visually dark game, using many lighting techniques for shadows to fuel the game's atmosphere. Meanwhile, it was a third-person shooter at heart, with the camera placed behind your male or female character. In previews, Edge Magazine compared the game to Die Hard Trilogy - specifically, that game's rendition of the first Die Hard movie. In 1998 however, Scavenger filed for bankruptcy, effectively cancelling all in-development games at the company, comprising of many Sega Saturn games, including Terminus. Other games cancelled include Angel, Aqua, Mudkicker, Spearhead, and

Tarantula. The blame for Scavenger's bankruptcy lies with a contract issue with fellow publisher GT Interactive, who failed to pay Scavenger efficiently for the work done on games developed for them. The NURBS technology employed by Terminus was later used for Messiah, a Shiny Entertainment game that was developed by the team behind Terminus (known as Team Fetus), who were taken on by Shiny, after Scavenger's bankruptcy. NURBS would have given Terminus a unique look to other console games at the time, which mostly had blocky characters and models. After Scavenger's closure, staff from their various developers would eventually join or form new companies such as Reto-Moto (Heroes & Generals), IO Interactive (Hitman, Freedom Fighters), Shiny Entertainment (MDK, Enter The Matrix), Starbreeze (The Chronicles of Riddick, The Darkness, Payday) and Machinegames (Wolfenstein: The New Order).



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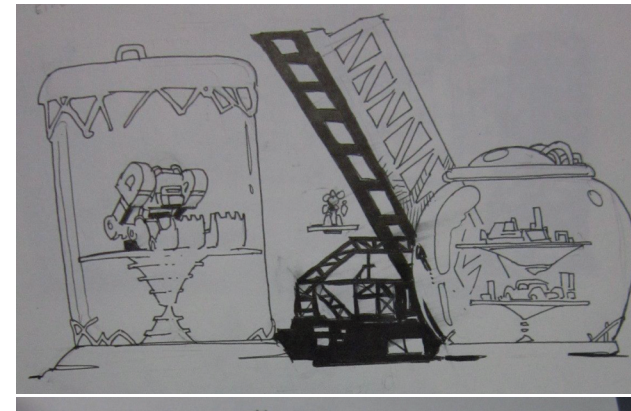
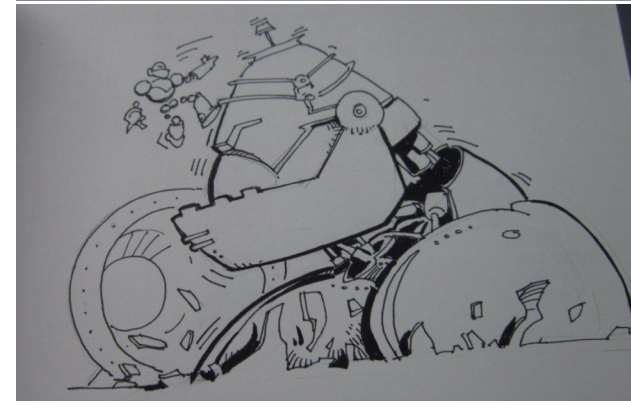
VECTORMAN ULTRA

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





Vectorman Ultra is the cancelled third game in the Vectorman series, started by the developers of the first entry, BlueSky Software, and published by Sega for Mega Drive / Genesis in 1995. The team was founded in 1988, and during the 16-bit generation, they mostly developed tie-in games and used popular licenses to create mid-tier titles such as Ariel the Little Mermaid, Jurassic Park and NFL Sports. Vectorman was one of their original IPs and became quite a popular game between Sega fans in the mid '90. Vectorman 2 was then released in November 1996 and after it went gold it seems that BlueSky already started to pitch a new sequel to Sega (Next Generation magazine published a rumor about it in their website that year), planning to develop it for Sega Saturn, the "new" Sega console that was released in May 1995 in the US. Ellis Goodson, the artist who worked on the original Vectorman, had drawn many concepts to be used in the design doc for Vectorman Ultra, written by Jason Weesner, Vectorman's original Game Designer that left BlueSky in 1995. As far as we know, the game was never started, maybe because of Weesner's departure or because Sega was not interested in funding a third game in the series. It seems that nothing more than the design doc was created for Vectorman 3 and the concept art was sold some years after on eBay. In a few of

those auctions, they described the game as planned for the Nintendo 64 as well, but it's possible that they were confused because of the word "Ultra" in the title (N64 was known as Ultra 64 before its final name). It's currently unknown if Sega Saturn's Vectorman was planned to be in 2D or 3D, but looking at the concept art it seems that at least the game would have had some side-scrolling levels. We hope to be able to see more from this project sometime in the future, it would be interesting to know if any actual prototype was started at all. BlueSky Software was officially closed in March 2001 when its parent company at the time, Titus Software, was nearing bankruptcy. Jason Weesner already left the studio in 1995 to join other gaming companies, such as Activision, Namco and Crystal Dynamics; today he's working as a Game Design Teacher at the Academy of Art University of San Francisco. After leaving BlueSky in 1996, Goodson went to work for The Neverhood, Monkeytropolis and Heavy-Iron; today he's still creating awesome storyboards and concept art as a freelancer. After the lost Vectorman 3, some years later Sega tried to revive the IP with a new 3D PS2 game developed by Pseudo Interactive, but that was also cancelled.

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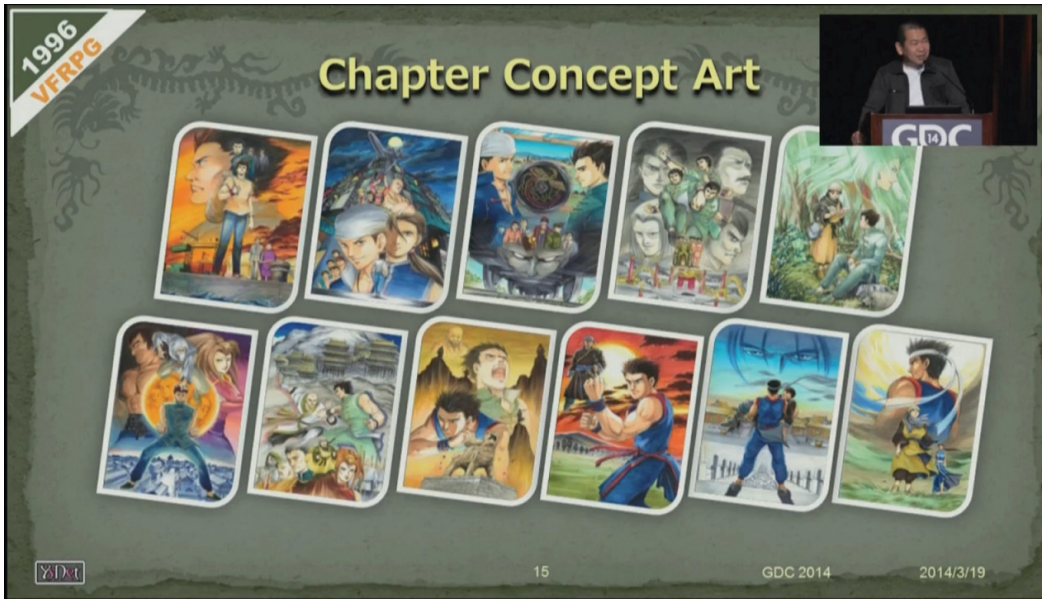
VIRTUA FIGHTER RPG: AKIRA'S STORY (SHENMUE)

Article by: Daniel Hannen, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Shenmue was an overly ambitious game, with the first chapter released for the Sega Dreamcast in 1999 in Japan. Following Ryu, whose father is killed by the main antagonist Lan Di, players were able to explore a characteristic Japanese suburban town in the mid '80s, talking with people, fighting against dozens of enemies in real time, investigating and finding clues, racing with a forklift, playing old games at the local arcade and buying capsule toys to collect classic Sega character models. At the time Shenmue was a major step forward for cinematic sandbox games on consoles, giving players a detailed world to look at, hours and hours of voiceover dialogues, interactive cutscenes, NPCs that followed their daily routines and many different side activities to do. While the two released chapters of Shenmue were not as successful as Sega wanted them to be - and after having spent millions of dollars for their development, the game still received much praise from Dreamcast owners. However, the project is not what Yu Suzuki originally had in mind. After designing many popular arcade games (Hang-On, Space Harrier, Out Run, After Burner, Virtua Fighter) with an average playtime of 3 minutes, Suzuki wanted to create a console title that could have kept players entertained for dozens of hours. In the early '90s he planned to create a huge RPG, that could have evolved the genre thanks to the new 3D technology that he already used in Virtua Fighter. By looking at 1980s and 1990s Japanese PC adventure games and RPGs (Mystery House, Wizardry, Ultima, Time Zone), Suzuki noticed many issues that limited his empathy with their stories, characters and worlds. In 1995 he conceived and developed an early prototype for a new type of role playing game on Sega Saturn, titled "The Old Man and the Peach Tree". By using a powerful 3D engine, the AM2 team was able to create a richer environment, with a full town to explore, with roads, trees, human and animal NPCs. The prototype was set in the 1950s in Luoyang, former capital of China. You would play as a young character named Taro who is searching for a Kung Fu master named Ryu. In one of the scenes described by Yu Suzuki, the player would have to find a peach to give to an old man, in order to get some help in seeking master Ryu. By the end of the prototype, Taro would find the old man throwing stones across a lake, with each stone hitting a fish or two. The children are cheering around him and by this point Taro knew this old man was master Ryu. This is the kind of feeling that Yu Suzuki wanted to evoke in his RPG, taking inspiration from Chinese folklore, martial arts and old kung-fu movies. Starting from the early prototype demo in 1996 the AM2 team began work on a full action RPG for the Saturn: when talking about the backstory, characters and tech to use in the game, they decided to use their Virtua Fighter series as the setting for the game. Their ambitious adventure became Virtua Fighter RPG, focusing on the character of



Akira and his growth from a young student to a skilled fighter. This game would use an enhanced Virtua Fighter engine optimized for the Saturn: they would have been able to reuse some of the models and animations from their fighting game, making it easier to create a fun and responsive gameplay during combat. The plan was to create a huge, open world 3D RPG, with voiced dialogue and fights with multiple enemies instead of the one-to-one battles seen in Virtua fighter. The initial plot followed an outline similar to the story later seen in Shenmue, as for example the protagonist's father dying at the beginning of the game, and would have probably featured other characters from the VF series as Lau Chan. Eleven chapters were conceived for Virtua Fighter RPG: Akira's Story and concept arts were created to show the main event planned for each chapter. The team used these artworks as a way to keep track of what they wanted to achieve. These concepts were shown by Suzuki at GDC 2014 during his Shenmue post-mortem conference and reveal a much different and larger plot from the one we tasted in the two released chapters of Shenmue on the Dreamcast. Many events and trials were planned to be overcame by Akira before meeting with Shenhua Ling in the mountains of Guilin, during the fifth chapter of Virtua Fighter RPG on the Saturn. On the Dreamcast, Ryo already meets with Shenhua near the end of Shenmue: Chapter 2. Reading a few old interviews and previews, it seems that at some point 16 chapters were planned in total, of which the 5 new ones would have been used to play parts of the story during long travels on boats and trains that Akira would have taken to

move across China. In Shenmue, the boat trip undertook by Ryo to reach Hong Kong is not playable, and in Shenmue 2 we start the game just after arriving at our destination in Hong Kong (a comic with a short scene from the cut boat chapter was unlockcable in the Xbox version of Shenmue 2). Unfortunately, it seems that Virtua Fighter RPG was too ambitious for the Saturn: after creating some playable portions of the game, in 1997 Suzuki switched development to Sega's next gen console. While the final Dreamcast hardware was not available yet, a more powerful console would allow to AM2 to achieve the cinematic quality and 3D world originally imagined for the game. Virtua Fighter RPG was renamed with the temporary title of Project Berkley. In November 1998, Virtua Fighter 3tb was released as a launch title for the Dreamcast along with a GD-ROM disc with the first trailer of Project Berkley. In this footage the main protagonist still looks very similar to Akira from Virtua Fighter, and he would continue to look like this through development until at some point he was added a brown jacket. The game was then labeled as “FREE” instead than using the classic RPG label, an acronym that means “Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment"; a way to create a new genre for the project. In 2001, Shenmue 2 was published for the Dreamcast and the following year for the newly released Xbox. Upon completing the game, players would unlock a video of the Saturn version of Shenmue, when it was still Virtua Fighter RPG. This was the first look that people outside of Sega had at one of the most ambitious games ever planned for 32 bit consoles. Looking back at what happened with Shenmue on the Dreamcast, we can probably say that the project was still too ambitious for the 128 bit console: Yu Suzuki overestimated the resources needed to create such a huge, open world RPG in 11 long chapters. In 2015, 14 years after the initial release of the second chapter of Shenmue, the third one was officially announced by Yu Suzuki at Sony's E3 conference, with a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter. The game is expected to be released in December 2017: we can only wait and see what the team will be able to achieve with today’s technology and standards.

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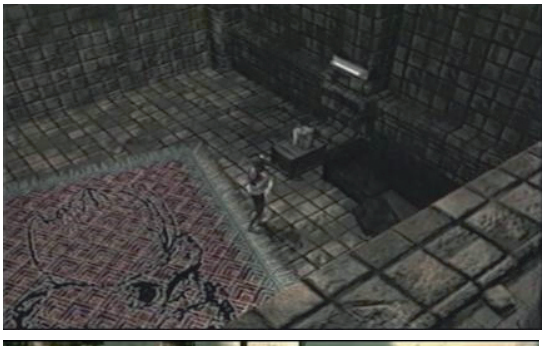
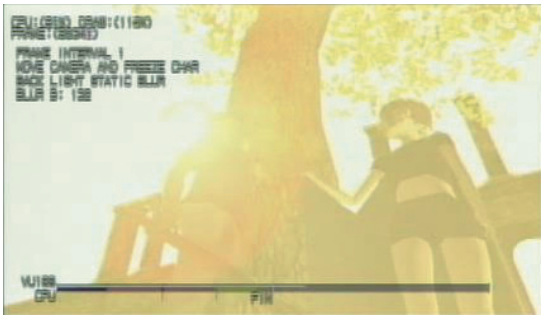
Playstation

Article by: Silvio Carréra, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The original PlayStation came out in 1994 in Japan with America and rest the world the following year. The console was an instant success and went on to sell 2 million units in its first six months. With launch titles like Ridge Racer, Battle Arena Toshinden, Jumping Flash! and Wipeout, gamers welcomed Sony into their homes as a new exciting hardware to play with great ports of popular arcade games or to enjoy new 3D worlds. Sony's marketing campaign was also massive, aiming at young adult instead than kids, teenagers or families as their competitors did in the past: with a great presentation at E3 1995, PlayStation soon became the new cool tech everyone was talking about. Sony had been keen to enter the gaming market since the mid 80s. In 1988 they made a contract with Nintendo and started working on a CD-ROM add-on for the SNES. In 1991 they unveiled the console called "Play Station" that was compatible with original SNES games and the newly SNES-CD games. The two companies then conflicted over control of the licensing which led Nintendo to seek Philips, Sony's industry rival, for a better deal. A few years later the companies sorted out their differences but Sony had already decided to build a console of it's own. In a couple of years PlayStation owners could play titles like Tekken (1995), Twisted Metal (1995), Resident Evil (1996), Tomb Raider (1996), Crash Bandicoot (1996) and PaRappa the Rapper (1996): it's easy to see how Sony had plenty of "killer applications" to sell their console. The PlayStation caused a big impact on the industry and on its competitors Nintendo and Sega. The console had everything at the time: it was easy to develop to, it had cheap to produce high memory size media (CD), great 3D graphic and a long list of third parties support. The industry saw the PlayStation as the next new thing and flocked to it. Companies like Capcom, Namco, Square, Enix, Activision, EA and Konami, wanted a piece of the cake. New titles like Gran Turismo (1997), Final Fantasy VII (1997), Tomb Raider II (1997), Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee (1997), Grand Theft Auto (1997), Castlevania: Symphony of the Night (1997), Micro Machines V3 (1997), Tekken 3 (1998), Metal Gear Solid (1998), Spyro the Dragon (1998), Tony Hawk's Pro Skater (1999), Driver (1999), Crash Team Racing (1999), Silent Hill (1999), Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver (1999) and Syphon Filter (1999) went on not only to become profitable but also to be seen as new classics for a new generation of gamers. Survival horror titles, 3D racers, 3D action adventures, 3D platformers, J-RPG, 3D fighting and stealth games flourished on the Playstation and were the most played genres worldwide during the late '90s. There are many less known yet fun and interesting games available on the original Playstation, that still had their good number of fans in the vast PSX user base; these are titles like Tomba! (1997), Poy Poy (1997), Intelligent Qube / Kurushi (1997), MegaMan Legends (1997), Alundra (1997), Tail Concerto (1998), Skullmonkeys (1998), Ehrgeiz (1998), Suikoden II (1998), Rakugaki Showtime (1999), The Misadventures of Tron Bonne (1999), Silent Bomber (1999), Vib Ribbon (1999) and Team Buddies (2000). Thanks to a vast market to sell to, Square were able to develop and release in the west a long series of Playstation games that could have remained only in Japan during the 16-bit generation, titles as Final Fantasy Tactics (1997), Bushido Blade (1997), Parasite Eve (1998), Xenogears (1998), Brave Fencer Musashi (1998), Chrono Cross (1999) and Vagrant Story (2000). After becoming such an international hit, the original PlayStation was officially discontinued in 2005 and ended up with more than 100 million units being sold. As it happened with the NES, everyone wanted to develop games for the most popular console on the market, but not every project made it to the shelf. The most iconic and interesting cancelled Playstation games that we collected in this book are just a few of the hundreds of lost titles planned for the console, but they represent a good variety of genres (3D platformer, action adventure, survival horror, RPG) that marked late '90s gaming with their characteristics.

ICO





Article by: Philip Dempsey

ICO was an adventure puzzle game created by Team ICO and released for the Playstation 2 in 2002. The plot followed a young boy with horned helmet named Ico trying to escape a castle he was trapped in. Along the way, Ico finds a girl named Yorda who seems to have a connection to the castle. As the story progresses, Ico has to navigate the complex layout of the castle, solve puzzles and defend Yorda from shadow monsters who are very reluctant to let her leave. Ico quickly became a cult classic on its release due to its haunting atmosphere and minimalistic style. ICO's development began in 1997 for the original Playstation when creator Fumito Ueda created a 3 minute video to pitch to Sony. Through out the development, Ueda kept a simple plot: a boy, a girl and a castle. This pitch video did not show any gameplay, instead presented Ueda's original idea for the story. In an interview with 1up.com, Ueda described a scene from the video showing two characters meeting, a young boy watching a horned girl walk towards a sofa. She is clutching her arm as she walks. After this, there were scenes of robots and the pair trying to dodge explosions which seem to clash with the normally clam tone of the final game. Unfortunately this video has never been released to the pubic in full, however pieces of the pitch video would be seen later: in 2005 the collectors edition of ICO's follow up Shadow of the Colossus came with a bonus DVD which contained a video showing prototype and beta footage of the lost Playstation version of ICO. It is here where we can see what appears to be footage from the early pitch video. What is surprising is the art style that was used was more detailed and realistic looking compared to the stylized look they later went with. The character designs were also different; Ico is missing his trademark horns and tunic and it's Yorda that had horns instead. Interesting enough, Ico's prototype clothes of a red shirt and shorts can be still seen under his tunic in the final game. Early plot details are rare and the game is know to have gone through a number of rewrites. One plot that is known about is Ico as a servant / slave trying to return Yorda to her room after she was kidnapped by horned soldiers. This was rejected for being too dark although footage of Ico fighting horned humans while one tries to drag Yorda away in a similar fashion to the mist monsters in the final game. Soldiers weren't the only danger in the prototype as the castle was designed with trap. In the Playstation 1 video at one point, Ico has to dodge an arrow fired from the wall. This scene also shows what might be an early health bar that was later scraped. Work on ICO fully began in October 1998 using key frame animation instead of motion capture. Development continued until September 1999 where frustration with the PSone hardware had taken its toll on the team. They were left with 3 choices: cancel the

game, compromise and finish it on the PSone or move development to the then-upcoming PS2. Luckily it was decided to move it to the much more powerful PS2 which solved many of the CPU and AI issues plaguing development. Better hardware also allowed the team to work with better lighting and effect that gave ICO its unique feel. While ICO's sales were not stellar (selling around 700,000 copies worldwide) it did strike a cord with critics, winning it many awards for its style and design. The game was also praised by other developers and has been cited as an inspiration for many famous games such as The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater and the Dark Souls franchise. ICO's follow up Shadow of the Colossus was released in 2005 to much public and critical approval. Both ICO and SotC were given a HD update in 2011 for the PS3. A second follow up called The Last Guardian was announced in 2009 for PS3 but has run into the same fate as the original ICO, postponed and vanished from release lists. Many feared The Last Guardian was canceled until it returned at E3 2015, now planned to be released on the PS4. Probably we'll never know how much different ICO would have been on the PSone, but in this case we are happy that such a beautiful game was not lost forever and everyone can enjoy it on PS2 and PS3.

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LUFIA 3: RUINS CHASER

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Lufia, also known as Estpolis Denki in Japan, is a cult-classic series of RPG developed by Neverland Co Ltd, started on the Super Nintendo in 1993 with Lufia & the Fortress of Doom. The game soon became a hit amongst RPG fans and a few sequels were released in the following years: Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals (1995, SNES), Lufia: The Legend Returns (2001, Game Boy Color), Lufia: The Ruins of Lore (2002, GBA, developed by Atelier Double) and Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals (2010, Nintendo DS). Unfortunately the true third chapter of Lufia planned for Sony's first home console never saw the light of day. In early '98 Japanese publisher Nihon Flex announced that it was funding the development of Lufia 3: Ruins Chaser, a project that would have taken advantage of the 32-bit Playstation console and its CD format. Hype was huge among fans of the series, dreaming about a new chapter with even bigger worlds to explore, better graphics and animated full motion videos to tell the story: a plot that would have taken place 300 years after Lufia 1. Neverland's intention was to conclude the popular SNES storyline and at the same time begin a new one to introduce future episodes of the series. There were six main characters planned and the graphics were said to be in isometric 2D, similar to their last SNES game titled "Energy Breaker", released only in Japan in July 1996. At Spring Tokyo Game Show 1998, held at Makuhari Messe in Tokyo from March 21 to 22, Nihon Flex unveiled Lufia 3 for the first time, giving out a 12 pages booklet and showing a short teaser video with preliminary artworks and details. The title was reported to be 20% completed at the time. Natsume, the American publisher of previous Lufia titles, confirmed at E3 1998 that the game was scheduled for the second quarter of 1999 for Playstation. The following is the full translation for Lufia 3 backstory taken from the teaser video:

"Now, once again... the legend returns... Gods were real. However, they were different from what humanity wished they were. The four gods presided over terror, destruction, chaos and massacres. They ruled above humanity, from their Doom Island, floating in the skies... A hero was born. Maxim, the sole "human" who can wield the Dual Blade, a sword which amplifies energy waves, fought against the four gods... The gods vanished. Because of Maxim, the four gods vanished from the world. Without being swallowed by a profound despair, humanity began to walk once again a path of prosperity.

From the Oracles Annals, The First Doom Island War... 100 years passed. People forgot completely The First Doom Island War and were openly enjoying prosperity. However, only a young boy who inherited Maxim's

blood remained vigilant regarding the four gods... There was a young girl. Lufia, a young girl with blue hair. She, who forgot everything, opened her heart only to the boy who inherited Maxim's blood... The gods revived. Thanks to the destined young girl, Lufia, the four gods revived. The nightmarish island - Doom Island - cast its shadow of despair above humanity, once again... The young boy drew his sword. The young boy pointed the Dual Blade to Lufia. Only by taking the sword to the beloved girl humanity could be saved by this crisis... The gods vanished. At a great expense, the gods vanished. Humanity was saved once again by a hero who had inherited Maxim's blood.

From the Oracles Annals, The Second Doom Island War... 100 years after The Second Doom Island War. With the steam engine invention, humanity began to walk the mechanization path. The unlimitedly produced energy changed humanity's lifestyle completely... Then, heroes disappeared. In a peaceful prosperous era, heroes were not needed. Now, no one remembered who inherited Maxim's blood... Then, the Dual Blade vanished. On the very bottom of the thriving light, jetblack darkness was spreading. No one, as of yet, has noticed. Arek and the Sinistrals... The final battle with them begins now."

Details about Lufia 3's main characters were also shown in the same teaser:

- Shion Curtis: "I'm gonna find Doom Island!" A courageous and positive young man who thinks that everything can be done if effort is put in it. He lives every day enthusiastically with all his might. Admiring Maxim he becomes a Ruin Chaser in order to find Doom Island. He extremely hates the thinking that to save many a few have to be sacrificed.
- Cecile Lingham: "I'll fight to live on. That's all!" She's cool and calm for her age. To Shion's belief that everything can be done if effort is put in it, she answers that he's just an idiot, very ignorant of the ways of the world. A kind girl in truth, but she cannot be honest. Has a foul tongue, but that's only because she's embarrassed to honestly show her kindness. Not having parents, she spent her childhood in an orphanage.
- Lily Ling: "I smell gold on this mountain" Extremely greedy. Even the fact she became a Ruins Chaser is obviously to strike rich quick. Frivolous and foul mouthed but she actually has a feeling heart.
- Yuh Shaia: "If you give me five minutes, I'll fix it" A descendant of the Shaias. Obviously, a genius regarding machines. He has two older sisters and when he was a child he thought to be a girl too. Due to this trauma, when he grew, he came to admire manliness. For Yuh, Shion represents his ideal, so after joining his party, he dearly loves him like he was his older brother.
- Michelle Regnas: "It is my duty to straighten up my dear Albert" A young lady of the Regnas family that was ruined due to the Fire Storm. During a certain event, she meets Albert and falls for him at first sight. And so, she becomes a Ruin Chaser. When she came to know about Albert's sword fetish, she received the biggest shock of her life, but without getting down, she vowed to correct him.
- Albert Ross: "The brilliance of this sword... is beautiful" A fencer who is trying to master the way of the sword. But in truth he is a sword maniac. Although a freak, his skill with the sword is real. Even the fact he became a Ruin Chaser is because he is searching for the legendary blade "Regnas Sword".

These characters would be the "Ruin Chasers", those who chase ruins for adventures and treasures. Other key events, places and people in Lufia 3's storyline would have been the Fire Storm ("an unprecedented crisis that struck humanity with flames rising up in the skies, cutting a cross in them"), the Oracles Cardinal ("An armed group that saved humanity from Fire Storm and makers of humanity rebuilding. However, few know the facts about it and they remain a completely mysterious organization"), Doom Island ("A nightmarish island often seen floating in the sky, where the "Fortress of Doom" is located"), Operations Doom ("Without a sacrifice, this operation will not succeed: the Oracles Cardinal trump card. What is its true meaning?"), The Four Great Ruins ("Four ruins appeared due to the Fire Storm. Those are the Ruin Chasers battlefields") and Naki ("a mysterious young girl who holds the key to everything. Two organizations act in secret, disputing for the blue and white haired young girl"). From these

details we can see how Lufia 3 would have followed and expanded the series' lore, with classic JRPG fantasy settings and mysterious characters. The teaser video ended with a question: "An era where waves have vanished. Six Ruin Chasers face off against humanity's biggest crisis! The Oracles Cardinal watch the course of events. And then, when Arek descends, humanity shivers in terror! Is there really a chance of victory for humanity...?" Unfortunately fans of the series never found out the answer to this question: in July 1998 Nihon Flex declared bankruptcy thus forcing Lufia 3 to be put on hold. In mid 1999 development was resumed but Neverland decided to cut expenses and develop the project for the newly released Game Boy Color. The team had to scrap what was already done on the Playstation to create something that could have fit on the cartridge based "8-bit" handled. Storyline and characters were completely changed, puzzle elements featured in past Lufia games were removed: the game was later subtitled "The Legend Returns". Not much was left from the original Lufia 3: Ruin Chaser concept and the Game Boy Color title was not a proper conclusion to the planned Lufia trilogy storyline. A few years later a song planned for Lufia 3 Playstation was shared online by composer Yukio Nakajima thanks to Lufia-fansite Forfeit Island and user SinReVi. In February 2016 the original design document created for Lufia 3: Ruins Chaser was available for bidding on the Japanese Yahoo Auction website, with a few details about its content: "Scenario related (plot, dungeon maps) 109 pages, Battle Screen Layout Design 43 pages, Field Map Design Layout 8 pages, World Map Design Layout 5 pages, Camp Design Layout 30 pages, Speech bubble designs 9 pages, Storyboard 27 pages, Capsule Monsters rough designs 13 pages, Party characters battle pattern and monsters 40 pages, Image Board 22 pages, Image board (B4 Size) 14 pages." Unfortunately the design document was offered for an overly-high price and the auction finished without any bid. It's currently unknown what happened to it or if it will ever be recovered and preserved. After abandoning 32-Bit development with only a Sega Saturn game ever released (Senkutsu Katsuryu Taisen: Chaos Seed), Neverland worked on a few more cult titles such as Record of Lodoss War (Dreamcast), CIMA: The Enemy (GBA), Shining Force Neo + EXA (PS2) and the Rune Factory series (DS, Wii, PS3 and 3DS). Unfortunately on November 2013 the company was closed due to bankruptcy, but at least part of the team was later hired in early 2014 by Marvelous AQL to work on a new 3DS RPG titled "Lord of Magna: Maiden Heaven", released in 2015 in North America and Europe. It's hard to say if we'll ever see another Lufia: it seems that the IP is owned by Taito / Square Enix in Japan and licensed to Natsume Inc and Atlus in North America. With the original team disbanded it would probably be difficult to find an agreement between all these different companies to create a sequel to a now forgotten RPG series.

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MALICE

Article by: Andrew Borman

Developed by Argonaut Games, the studio famous for their work on the Super FX chip for the Super Nintendo and the early Star Fox games, Malice was a 3D platformer with a long development history that stretched over multiple console generations. The final version, released for the Playstation 2 and Xbox in mid 2004, was quite different than the work done on the original Playstation, although it too went through multiple iterations. Malice started as an Xbox exclusive that was praised for its graphics, adding (and removing) Gwen Stefani of No Doubt fame, and ultimately ending up as a game that no one was truly in love with. Work on Malice started in 1998 for the original Playstation using the Croc 2 engine that Argonaut had already developed. The game's main character was Alice, a mage who could control the five elements which would empower her with special abilities. For example, the earth magic allowed Alice to bat-glide across a level, the water magic allowed Alice to water-ski, and the fire magic burned enemies. It isn't entirely clear how the levels would have progressed since the game was extremely fragmented when it was cancelled. Alice's Dog-God (which is exactly what is sounds like) was a major driving force in the game's story, as it becomes possessed and burns down the forest while corrupting the once-friendly animals. The Dog-God even transforms Alice into a cat named "Kat", although a kind Granny (who was actually a witch) turns you back to normal. It is in the Granny's hut that Alice collects the Mace-of-Club:, a giant weapon that helps her defeat the corrupted enemies throughout the world. The Dog-God wasn't the only important enemy in the story; the Jujuman was another beast corrupting things in his own way, whom Alice has to defeat in order to gain access to the Siren Tree. While Malice looked good and took advantage of the developers' previous experience working on Croc games, it was cancelled due to both technical issues and business decisions. In the state Malice was in when it was cancelled, each level was essentially a separate entity. A developer menu had to be used to select and play individual levels; there was no progression of any kind implemented. Unlike many games today which use solid levels with as few seams as possible, Malice was built using tilesets. As with many games of the time, the camera was proving to be an issue, as it, too, got stuck often, partially due to the tileset design and the design of the levels. The camera and the character could even fall through the tilesets of the map! Other design

issues were also causing problems with the game. Important variables, like gravity settings, were set differently depending on the level and the designer who worked on it. This meant that each level had Alice jumping different distances and at different heights, which caused issues for players since they never really knew how she would control. This independent design had even more negative implications for coders, as they were designing multiple versions of the same thing over and over again, with no communication between the designers. Argonaut would eventually try to fix this issue by creating smaller groups, but this caused the game to became "too standardized in some areas", according to one developer. The truth is that there was still a lot of work to be done on Malice on the Playstation. Cutscenes were yet to be developed, and the other issues would take a lot of time to fix, putting it dangerously close to the then-next generation Playstation 2 and Xbox releases. This is where the business decision was made to move Malice to the Xbox, at least initially, where Microsoft was happy to show the game as an early Xbox title. THis transitions didn't work perfectly, as the developers had issues reworking the Playstation content into an Xbox title, thus suffering further delays. Changes were made, platforms shuffled, and publishers pulled out, until the game was essentially unrecognizable by the time it was released in 2004. Two playable demos of the cancelled Playstation build exist, labelled version 1 and version 2. The first demo is much more basic, lacking many of the features found in the later. Version 2 has multiple levels, although not all of them are completable. A few years later, Argonaut would produce games like Bionicle: The Game, i-Ninja, and Powerdrome in 2003 and 2004, though this came at a cost. Over one hundred employees win October 2004, officially dissolving in 2006. Whatever potential Malice had would disappear with the studio.

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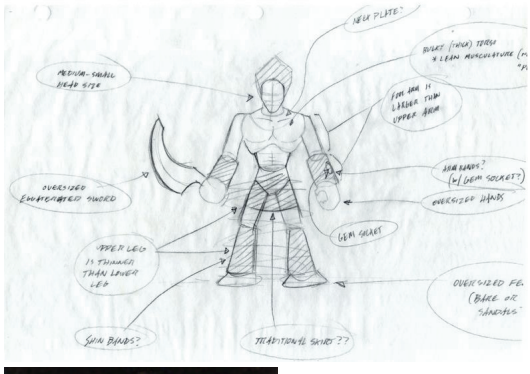
POWERSLAVE 2 (EXHUMED 2)

Article by: Jesse Cook

If you were developing a first-person-shooter in the mid-to-late nineties, chances are you were crafting your game in the monolithic shadow of id Software's 1993 hit Doom. For the small developer Lobotomy Software, PowerSlave served as their nod to the FPS giant. Lobotomy Software was formed from a couple of employees of the Game Play Counselor service that Nintendo of America offered to fledgling gamers during the height of Nintendo's popularity in the 80s and early 90s. For those who do not remember, or have not heard of this charming phenomenon in gaming culture, Game Play Counselors were an elite group of Nintendo gamers who manned the Nintendo "Powerline," a phone service that provided struggling players with tips in order to complete some of Nintendo's most challenging games. That's right: there was a time when players could call Nintendo to receive assistance on games for a per-minute toll. In an interview with Brian McNeely (one of Lobotomy's founders) by Ross Sillifant, McNeely explains that this job at Nintendo was responsible for helping him succeed as a game designer: "When I look back at that experience I realize more and more how it was essentially an education in game design fundamentals. Over the course of several years I played hundreds of games while on the job, many of them to completion, and some of them multiple times... Through it all I was able to gain a lot of design insight into what makes a game fun, what frustrates the player (for better or worse), the importance of rewarding the player, pacing, difficulty, the relationships between art and game play and audio and technology, level design, progression, etc., etc... " The first game created by the newly founded Lobotomy was Joe Louis Boxing, a Punch-Out clone that followed the career of the famous Joe Louis. Interestingly enough, this game was never released, serving as an advertisement for Lobotomy to big publishing companies. It must have worked, for the team would create their first big game PowerSlave, or as it is known in the UK Exhumed (a.k.a AD 1999: Pharaoh's Revival in Japan), shortly after. Built using the aptly titled Build engine from Apogee, the team set out to make an Egyptian themed FPS for PC, which then ended up with two more ports during development to the Playstation and Sega Saturn. These ports were scheduled to be released over a one-year span from 1996, with the Sega Saturn and PC version, and concluding with the Playstation version in 1997. However, the console versions of PowerSlave were

built using a separate engine, and as a result they contained a bevy of new levels, ending cutscenes, collectibles, and level designs. Essentially, a large number of items that gave the game replayability were not implemented into the PC version, a rare occurrence for games both old and new. This is something that makes the game particularly endearing to those who discovered it on either Sega or Sony console, for it was a rarity at the time to find thoughtful and adamant attempts at console-based FPS's. Plotwise, PowerSlave followed a team of special ops soldiers attempting to infiltrate the Egyptian city of Karnak, which was been taken over by an unknown force known as the Kilmaat. This mysterious force is an army consisting of an assortment of mummies, Anubis soldiers, evil spirits, and various other regional creatures, who came to Karnak in order to drain the power from the soul of King Ramses so as to complete their mission of taking over the world. In general, the game plays more like Metroid Prime than other FPSs of the time, tasking the player to find new items to reach secret areas and open new paths. Weapons ranged from the standard sidearm to larger machine guns and science fiction inspired rifles, to powers that could be summoned from the character's hand a la Bioshock or Dishonored. Items and power-ups were given to players in later parts of the game, allowing them to go back and explore previously inaccessible areas, like underwater pathways and unreachable cliffs. They also included artifacts tied to Egyptian mythology, such as the Sobek Mask, to give the world a richness of lore. The aforementioned mask, which is only one of many artifacts, was based off of the god of the Nile, therefore it gave the player the ability to breathe underwater. This addition of mythology made the environment of PowerSlave a rich and beautiful world that players would love to explore time and time again. To reinforce its replayability and its narrative, Lobotomy created multiple endings for different playthroughs. This culminated into what appears to be a fairly successful release for the game, though it's not often referenced in contemporary discussions of video game history. What came next was the proposed plan for a sequel/prequel to the original PowerSlave, titled PowerSlave 2. This game would have been set thousands of years in the past in ancient Egypt, according to Lobotomy from an interview with Knightmare from GameFan. Much like the original title, PowerSlave 2 would have the player seeking a missing God - in this case Ra, the sun god, who was kidnapped by a rival god - fighting various enemies and other gods in order to gain experience and special powers needed to accomplish the mission. Taken from the GameFan interview: "At the start of the game, Ra (the sun God) disappears, causing a permanent solar eclipse on the land. It turns out that he has been abducted by one of his arch rivals, and it's your job to rescue him and return light to the world. As a young Egyptian warrior you must seek out the various Egyptian Gods and attempt to gain their supernatural powers, in order to ultimately challenge and defeat Ra's rival." This may sound like a simple sequel to the first game, and for the most part it was. The same rich narrative elements of the first game were planned for the sequel, as well as the mythology that influenced the items used by the player. However, Lobotomy planned on changing the playstyle of PowerSlave 2 from an FPS to a third person action game. Unfortunately, not many details were released on how exactly Lobotomy would implement this change. In addition to the global changes that Lobotomy planned to make in Powerslave 2, they also wanted to alter the way they compelled players to explore levels and enjoy design longevity by introducing the "Afterlife" ability, which would have been organically instilled in the character during a scripted death in the third level of the game. The Afterlife ability would allow the player to transition from the corporeal to the spiritual world of the game at will in order to find different ways of interacting with each level. Moving from one dimension to another who have allowed players differing traversal options, as well as provided opportunities to manipulate their environment through



"otherworldly" interactions with the levels in the spiritual realm. Lobotomy also intended to include some items and characters from the original Powerslave to form continuity between the two games, though they did not seem deeply interested in making any major story arc connections between the two games. There would have also been multiplayer functionality, though what that entailed is unknown. Lobotomy confirmed multiplayer for the PC version, and a link cable option for the Playstation version. It was mentioned that the camera would transition from third-person to a more traditional fighting style, which when combined with their mention of Tekken in their description, it seems plausible that multiplayer fighting would have focused on one-on-one battles. Even with what appears to be a fully developed outline for what the game would have been narratively on top of a working demo, it apparently never received support from any publishing companies to continue development and eventually Lobotomy dropped it entirely. Based on interview answers from McNeely regarding his retrospective disappointment in Lobotomy's decision to step so far afield of the original PowerSlave's FPS style, it suggests that the third-person system was also shunned by publishing companies that were looking for another hot FPS franchise to cash in on. Eventually, Lobotomy Software was acquired by Crave Entertainment in 1998, and the team was rebranded as Lobotomy Studios. Lobotomy has no other major releases to its name, though they did work on a few minor projects before being liquidated into the larger Crave Entertainment, and members were diffused into various other teams. In 2012, Crave went bankrupt. However, while Powerslave 2 will never see the light of day, the spirit of Powerslave is not dead as there is an unofficial remake in the works that was started in May of 2015. According to TechRaptor, Samuel 'Kaiser' Villarreal is working toward revitalizing the game for a new generation of FPS gamers. Villarreal hopes to bring the excellent console experience to PC players who missed out on the original, and to show new gamers a great classic FPS that took risks to set it apart from the rest.

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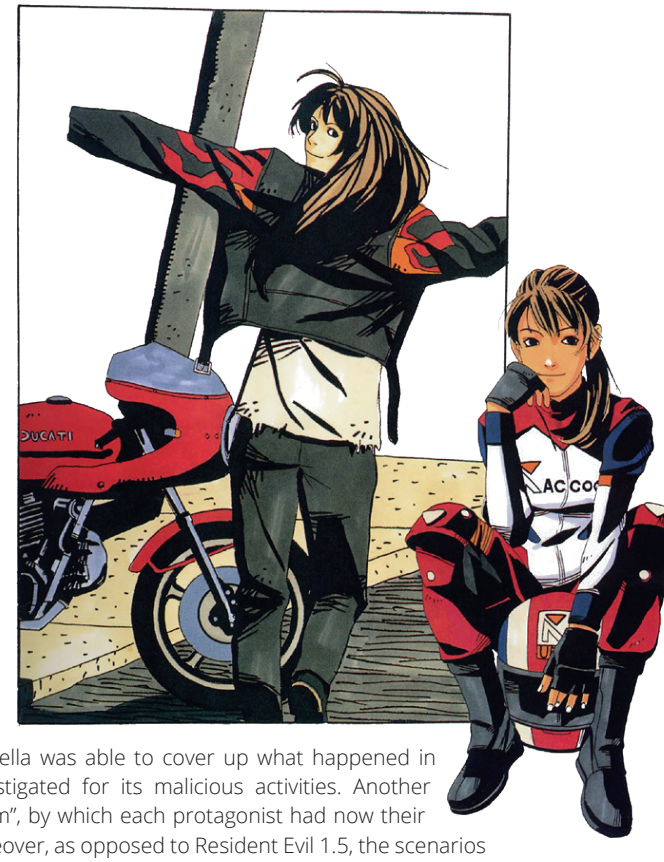
RESIDENT EVIL 1.5

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

The game known as "Resident Evil 1.5" is a cancelled survival horror title developed by Capcom that was originally slated for launch in may 1997 as a sequel to the first Resident Evil. The game was produced by Shinji Mikami and directed by Hideki Kamiya, who already worked on the original game as director and system planner respectively. Capcom started working on Resident Evil 1.5 in april 1996, with the project being at first shown to the public in july 1996 at the V-JUMP festival. In this early build Leon S. Kennedy (whose name was "Grant Bitman" in preliminary concept drawings), had a muscular build, short hair, and wore a blue suit with short sleeves under a black vest. The second playable character planned for the game was named Elza Walker, but at the time she was only shown in concept art. In this early version the Raccoon Police Department lobby and the Chief office had different layouts and furniture compared to later builds. Only two types of zombies (regular and fat) and three weapons (handgun, shotgun, handgun with burst fire) were included. In august 1996, Famitsu published some images apparently taken from the same V-JUMP build, even though Leon now sported a marginally different uniform without the word "Police" carved on the back. In a later prototype, documented in a september 1996 Capcom Fan Club VHS, Leon became more slender and he now wore jeans and a jacket. This build also introduced female zombies and showed, for the first time, locations outside of RPD like the Sewers

and the Laboratory. The furniture and the layouts of already known rooms such as the Lobby and Chief Office were likewise sensibly changed. A yet another build was documented in a november 1996 issue of Famitsu, finally showing in-game screenshots of an early, low-quality model of Elza Walker (with a much shorter ponytail) and of Leon wearing his classic RE 1.5 RPD uniform. For some reasons female zombies were later removed, while infected german shepherds were introduced for the first and last time, seeing that they would soon be replaced with dobermans. The same can be said about the narrow eight stalls of the Firing Range, which were superseded by four broad stalls in the next known build. The latter, shown in a december 1996 Capcom Fan Club VHS, featured new weapon holding animations for both protagonists, which now had also gloves. Elza Walker model was refined, and she now sported a longer ponytail. Moreover, this build finally introduced the first early, low quality models of secondary characters like Ada and John. Some camera angles included in past builds were also slightly changed. More importantly, in this beta we can see that developers were finally in the middle of adding the first known cutscenes, bosses (Birkin in the warehouse, the two gorillas in the parking lot), and puzzles. Another important addition in this build were (still non-functional) saving boxes, which were meant to replace both typewriters and storage chests. An ISO of this beta (dubbed by fans as the “40% complete version” or "40% Vanilla build") was leaked to the internet in september 2013. In the last known RE 1.5 build, mainly documented in the february 1997 issue of Hyper Playstation Re-Mix and in four videos included in the japan-only Biohazard complete disk, we finally got high-quality models for both secondary characters and protagonists, even if the new animations introduced in the last beta were removed. Many backgrounds and camera angles were slightly changed, while the early, “green” version of the drain was scrapped and replaced with a completely different one. More cutscenes, enemies (small alligators, a strange man-spider hybrid) and bosses (a big alligator and birkin’s other forms, which were completely different than those seen in RE2), were also added. Imagica, the company responsible for the CG videos of the first Resident Evil, had even start working on the game FMVs. However, some backgrounds had yet to be finalized and a few others were still completely missing. Puzzles and other gameplay mechanics were likewise probably not fully implemented. Thanks to some 1.5 leftovers found inside the Resident Evil 2 trial disk, we know that Capcom was still making

slightly changes to backgrounds up to december 1996. However, roughly in the same period, general manager Yoshiki Okamoto decided that the current scenario was extremely lacking and it had to revised, partily because it didn't have any connections with the first title and the story was too conclusive. Together with Noboru Sugimura, a new writer brought in precisely to help to change the original script, the development team decided then to replace Elza Walker with Claire Redfield, sister of the male protagonist of RE1, turn good police chief Brian Irons into an evil man corrupted by Umbrella, and drop completely Roy, an injured policeman who later became a zombie. Umbrella scientist Ada (whose name was "Linda" in early concept drawings), became a mysterious spy, while Marvin Branagh, who was a playable character in Resident Evil 1.5, was turned into a minor character. John, originally a supporting NPC for Elza, became Robert Kendo in Resident Evil 2. In order to make the scenario less conclusive, it was also resolved that Umbrella was able to cover up what happened in Resident Evil 1, thus avoiding being investigated for its malicious activities. Another important addition was the "Zapping system", by which each protagonist had now their own storyline and selection of puzzles. Moreover, as opposed to Resident Evil 1.5, the scenarios in RE2 became related and the two main characters could now encounter each other. Ultimately the huge revision of the script, together with the fact that Shinji Mikami simply didn't like the "1.5" incarnation of the game, led the development team to restart the project completely. Apart from a few RPD rooms (the armory, the morgue, the boiler room, the parking lot, the offices, etc), the laboratory was the only area that kept the original style, even if in Resident Evil 1.5 it was also supposed to burn down. Unfortunately, many Resident Evil 1.5 weapons, like SPAS-12 shotgun, S-Redhawk magnum, HL2K NC51 machine gun, M202 rocket launcher, hand grenades, a metal pipe, didn't survive the transition to Resident Evil 2. Some other planned features, including equippable armor vests, shutters that blocked zombies, visible damage to the main characters (such as bleeding and ripped clothes), were likewise scrapped. The item menu, which had a different layout in Resident Evil 1.5, became almost identical to the one featured in RE1. Nevertheless some Resident Evil 2 puzzles, such as the one in the library where we have to rearrange the bookshelves, the power console in the boiler room, or the burning helicopter that had to be extinguished, closely resemble similar ones seen in Resident Evil 1.5 builds. According to Shinji Mikami, RE 1.5 was 60-65% complete when it was scrapped, through other sources report a completion percentage of 70% (Hideki Kamiya) or 80% (Research on Biohazard 2 Final Edition Book). In 1999, a mysterious japanese player, allegedly in contact with a Capcom employee, took many photos of him playing through a "Complete Disk Build" and sent them to Kim Larsen, owner of Bioflames.com, who published the shots on his website. Unfortunately, nothing was heard from this japanese player ever again, and this beta remains unleaked. In 2012 an hacker group called IGAS started working on a "restored version" of a Resident Evil 1.5 prototype they were able to secure, wanting to fix bugs and make it more playable for a later official leak. After someone tried to sell a copy of this unfinished restoration, in february 2013 they decided to release their incomplete patched version online. Even if this "Restored RE 1.5" is not completed yet (as of mid 2016), an official demo titled "Battle Colosseum" (including only a brand new mini-game in which we fight hordes of enemies), was released in december 2015. While Resident Evil 1.5 remains a legendary lost project that fueled its fans' dreams for many years, Resident Evil 2 became a huge commercial success for Capcom, selling almost 5 millions units on the original Playstation. For sure the cancellation of Resident Evil 1.5 initiated a long series of researches, speculations, fan-theories and great preservation efforts that escalated in the leaked prototypes and the development of fan-restorations that will give to the title another chance to be enjoyed in a more complete form. Not many lost games can boast a dedicated community that invest so much time and resources to save such an important piece of gaming history.



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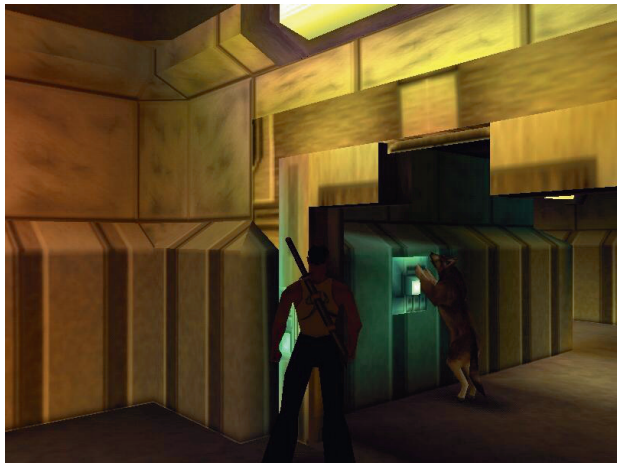
SABOTEUR

Article by: Tristan Avery

Saboteur is a canceled action adventure game, heavily inspired by '80s and '90s martial arts movies, that was in development in 1998 / 1999 by Tigon Software and was being published by Eidos for the PC and Playstation. Due to being released in Spring of 1999, Saboteur was a loose re-imagining of a game of the same name for the ZX Spectrum. The original press release is as follows: "Saboteur is a fast paced combat adventure game, which fuses genres and gameplay styles. It is a game that embraces new concepts and new production values whilst holding onto solid game-play values of older classic titles. It is not a fighting game, nor is it only an adventure game. Saboteur will be the first arcade adventure game to feature a full on 3D fighting system (complete with high/low defending and grapples). It embraces the complexity of 3D fighting games and adds multiple opponents. You play the part of Shin lenaga, trying to avenge the death of your grandfather and rescue your sister from the clutches of the evil G.E.N.E Corporation. The action is viewed from a third person perspective and involves a variety of combat, puzzle solving and exploration. It matches a strong story line to proven genres (action adventure and 3D combat) and adds its own spin of magic, ninja style. Saboteur's most unique feature is the introduction of a second character on the player's side. Shin is joined in his quest by Shiro, his faithful hound, who follows him wherever he goes. Shin is able to command Shiro to either attack enemies or give assistance in tricky areas of the game, by retrieving objects or helping to solve puzzles. Due to his advanced senses Shiro is able to give advance warning of approaching or hidden danger, however there is a price to pay if you don't look after him. Features: Strong story line and plot development with emphasis on Ninja main character; Refined Combat System within third person perspective. When in combat Shin operates on a different plane and automatically locks-on to the nearest attacker; Combat includes: hand-to-hand, swordplay, and weapons (throwing knives, guns and clubs); Use of second character on player's side – a largely computer controlled dog Shiro. Shiro is a powerful weapon in a fight and also a useful navigation tool in the game world; Wide range of characters (30+) each with their own set of unique moves; Sophisticated enemy AI, enemies learn your fighting style and adapt their defences to it; Variety of locations with over 20 levels spread across five huge game worlds; High technology – motion capture, single skinned objects, true object dynamics."



Described as being “like a Hollywood movie” and “a cross between Tomb Raider and Soul Blade” Saboteur was to include a unique gameplay style that could be seen as an early predecessor to the now standard action adventure gameplay format seen in games like Batman: Arkham Asylum and the Assassin’s Creed series. When the player was not involved in combat they would explore the levels in a gameplay style reminiscent of Tomb raider, and in combat it would shift to a fighting gameplay style more akin to titles like Tekken or Soul Blade (especially the latter, as the protagonist used a sword to fight). The game boasted an advanced AI for the time, citing that enemies would react differently depending on what weapon the player brandished, chase after the player if they ran away, and had “...a large number of unique animations capable of setting up a pattern of attack that will place them at an advantage over Shin if the player isn’t careful”. In order to fight back against this advanced AI, the game promised a substantial combat move list that rivaled other fighting games of the time. While the companion dog, Shino, would be controlled by the CPU for a majority of the game, he could also be utilized in combat to hold enemies down and to resolve environmental puzzles, such as opening a closed door by going through air ducts and pressing a button from the other side. The game ran at 30 fps and was to feature 5 worlds with 4-5 levels each and had fully interactive environments. The 30+ enemies featured in the game included humans as well as mutants and robots, presumably created by the villainous G.E.N.E Corporation. Aside from being comprised of a few members of the original Saboteur game for the ZX Spectrum, not much is known about Tigon Software. As far as we know, in 1999 Tigon managers closed the company and sold the rights to Saboteur to EIDOS. The publisher made Pumpkin Studio (the team behind cult RTS "Warzone 2100") to continue to develop the game for a while, but in early 2000 they canned it because of the demise of the Playstation 1 market.

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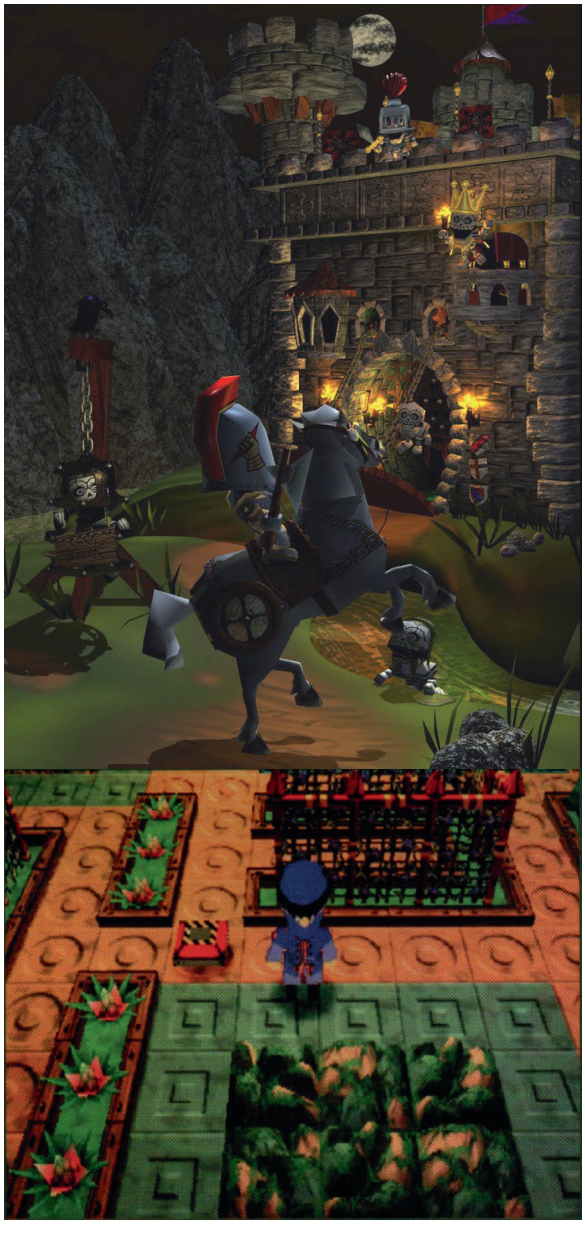
SHORT FUSES (POPCORN)

Article by: monokoma

Short Fuses (also known with its work-in-progress title “Popcorn”) is a cancelled action game that was in development for the original PlayStation in 1997 / 1998 by a rather obscure but special team called “Eighth Wonder”. What’s so special about them? To explain the importance of this team we have to take a step back: in the nineties Rare was one of the most prolific teams focused on Nintendo platforms, releasing such popular



games as Battletoads, Donkey Kong Country and Killer Instinct. Loved by many Nintendo fans, Rare was one of the first teams to ever get their hands on Nintendo 64 development kits and in August 1997 they released Goldeneye 007, a game that sold millions of copies and probably helped to sell a few N64 consoles too, thanks to its great single player mission mode and the highly regarded multiplayer. A few months before Goldeneye was released, the gaming world was shocked by a sudden news: a bunch of developers quit their job at Rare to create a new team funded by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe that would have created games exclusively for PlayStation. This new team was called "Eighth Wonder" and it was composed by Oliver Davies (game designer), Oliver Norton (software engineer), Steve Patrick (software engineer), Jeff Stafford (software engineer), Christopher Gage (artists) and Adrian Smith (artists, left the team a few months later), that soon were joined by Andrew Wood (artist) and Jemie Hemming (character design and creation). The hype for this Ex-Rare team was high, and many gamers were expecting great things to be created by such a talented group of people. The deal had SCEE committed to publishing Eighth Wonder's first three projects, with an option to publish the next three too if the previous ones would have been successful, but the team never released any games and they vanished forever without any trace. Short Fuses is the only game that was officially announced by them, and some information is available thanks to previews in old gaming magazines (Console+ magazine issue 78, Edge issue 60) and Websites. The game would have been similar to a 3D Bomberman clone but with puzzles and exploration elements that made the game a bit like Atic Atac, an old Rare title released in 1983 for ZX Spectrum and BBC Micro, in which players can explore a labyrinth with 3 characters, each one with their own secret passages available to open different parts of the levels. Short Fuses featured six worlds, each with three levels, and after you beat the boss of each world you could progress to the next one, and use the boss as a new playable character. More than 10 playable characters including bonus / hidden ones were planned such as a knight or a female ninja. As it happened with many Rare games, Short Fuses would have had beautiful graphics for its hardware and time, with lighting effects, high resolution graphics (512×240) and a consistent frame rate at 30 FPS. While the game would have been published by SCEE in Europe, at E3 1998 it was shown at the Sunsoft booth so it is likely that they could have been the American publisher. Unfortunately Short Fuses never had the chance to be released: after a series of unfortunate events, a few months later Sony pulled the plug on the project and Eighth Wonder had to close down. We don't know what happened to most of its developers, as it seems that only a couple of them still work in the gaming industry. When Short Fuses was cancelled it would have needed just another three months to be fully polished for release.

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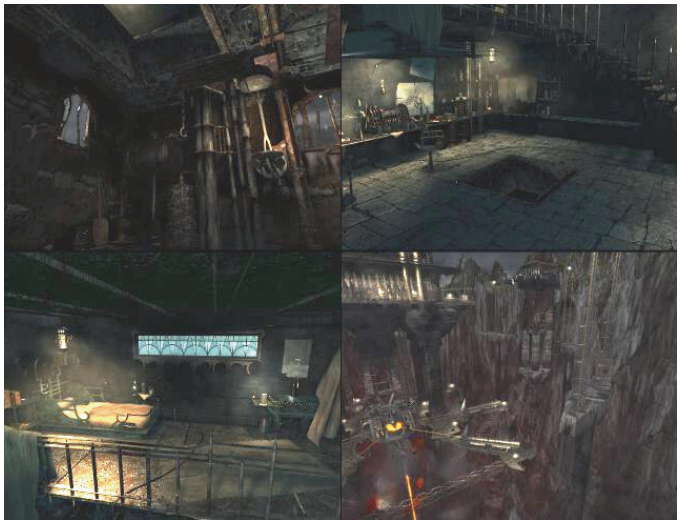
SILENT CHAOS

Article by: James Alan Griffiths

Silent Chaos is a canceled action adventure that was in development by French studio Kalisto Entertainment between 1997 and 1999. The game was planned to be published on the Playstation by Squaresoft, but the project was initially meant to be "Dark Earth 2", the ill fated sequel to the 1997 post-apocalyptic PC game developed by the same team. Despite a push to make Dark Earth into a popular franchise, the second game in the series was in development for just a few months, the reason it was canned unknown. Dark Earth 2 would experience a second chance albeit a short lived one, at the helm of an unlikely adopter. Squaresoft would somehow acquire the assets from Dark Earth 2 and employ one of its principal designers, Tetsura Nomura, to re-model the characters created by Kalisto and turn them into something perhaps more suited to the Japanese market anime styled action RPG archetypes. Nomura is one of the most beloved Japanese gaming artists, thanks to his work as designer, character illustrator and supervisor for many popular titles in the Final Fantasy series, Ehrgeiz, Parasite Eve, The Bouncer, Kingdom Hearts and The World Ends with You. The Playstation iteration of Silent Chaos would feature gorgeous pre-rendered backgrounds like an evolution of what had been created in Square games such as Final Fantasy 7 and Parasite Eve. As it initially started out as a sequel to Dark Earth, we can assume that Silent Chaos' style and gameplay would have been similar to it, with 3D characters exploring, talking with NPC and fighting on a 2D pre-rendered world. With Kalisto being used to the Playstation hardware thanks to the development of Nightmare Creatures (released in late 1997) and the support of such a legendary company as Squaresoft, Silent Chaos could really have been a new role playing classic for the 32-bit generation. Unfortunately, after a couple of years of development Silent Chaos was canned for the PSX, because of shift of development to the soon to be released Playstation 2. A short cinematic trailer is the only footage of the game that exists. Dripping in edgy gothic horror, it shows what we could have expected from the finished product: a fantasy setting featuring towns with wooden huts; huge, illuminated castles we may have been able to explore. A man who transforms into a demon and the protagonist of the game being able to freeze time to kill his enemy. What's not to like about that? Interestingly, the end of the trailer features the "PS2" logo, confirming that Silent Chaos was ultimately switched for Sony's sequel console. This could have been the final nail in the coffin for Silent Chaos. Although technically a marvel for the PSX, the game looks kinda ropey for the likes of the Playstation 2, especially when Squaresoft were going to publish a gorgeous (at the time) looking title as The Bouncer. Graphically, Silent Chaos got a jagged, polygonal look that didn't conform to the standards set by Sony's new console. Porting the game over from its original Playstation version and giving it a bit of a polish may have exposed the game as being stuck in the last generation and we assume that Squaresoft decided to invest their



resources in other, newer titles as The Bouncer, Driving Emotion Type-S and Final Fantasy X. After Squaresoft abandoned Silent Chaos, Kalisto Entertainment are said to have tried again to resurrect their Dark Earth sequel for Playstation 2, working for about 6 months on the project, but again nothing came to fruition. Kalisto would finally declare bankruptcy and close down in 2002. Square Enix would create some of the best loved games on the Playstation 2. Silent Chaos was sadly not one of them: like Dark Earth 2, it's been confined to the annals of gaming history.

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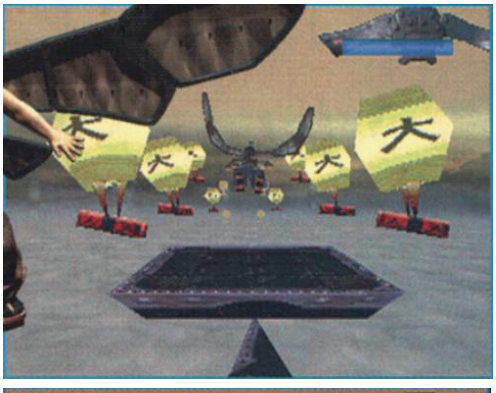
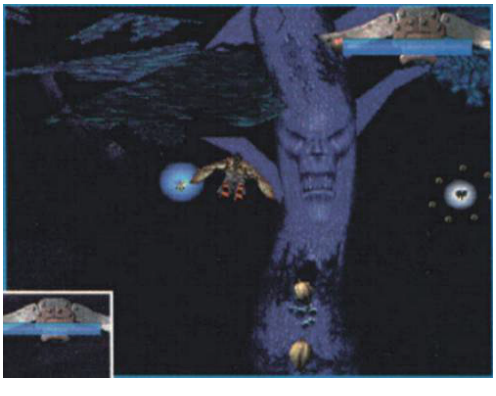
THE DIABOLICAL ADVENTURES OF TOBU





Article by: Alberto Li Vigni

The Diabolical Adventures of Tobu is a flight-based action game that was in development at 989 Studios for Playstation between 1997 and 1999. Set in a mystical version of Asia during the middle-ages, the game followed the quest of a winged boy called Tobu, who has to rescue his uncle from the cruel emperor Nen Hithol and his henchmen. While the flying fantasy setting was inspired by the popular Panzer Dragoon, The Diabolical Adventures of Tobu notably allowed full-360 degree freedom of movement, and it was unique in (apparently) not being a shooter; as far as we know, the only way to hurt enemies was to ram into them. Ramming into enemies, using a short boost dash, and flying in general, depleted a stamina bar that was only replenished by collecting floating blue orbs. While the game looked great in the screenshots found in a few magazines, not much was ever revealed about its gameplay, story, and features. One of the game's artists later stated that Tobu was a "full roaming flying platform game that took place above an endless sea of clouds. It was divided into a series of levels accessed by a central hub". In a preview from Next Generation magazine, the game was likewise described as a hybrid between a platformer and a flight sim with the control mechanics of Joust. In some levels the player had to fly through rings and evade enemies, something that sounds like a mix between Mario 64 and Pilot Wings. Other than having a great looking 3D engine on the original Playstation, the team also wanted to have some interesting FMV with real puppets modeled on their concept arts. In 2015, San Francisco artist Terrance Graven left a comment on the Unseen64 website, revealing that he worked on the animations that would have been used to tell the story of Tobu: "This game was supposed to contain cutscenes that featured stop-mo animation. We reused armatures that were used in Nightmare Before Christmas!" The Diabolical Adventures of Tobu was already in a fully playable beta stage before it was axed. The final blow came in the form of a focus group that found the beta to be to be lackluster and too difficult to play. 989 Studios spent a month or two trying to make the game better, but ultimately the team working on it was restructured and the project dropped. Tobu was not the only game cancelled by 989 Studios during this time, as their other Playstation titles Dark Guns, Sorcery, Warhawk 2, and Barnstormers

were never released as well. We can speculate that Sony gave them too many projects to work on while maintaining high quality standards. In just a couple of years (1998 - 1999) they released more than 10 games, but a few had to be canned in order to ensure the success of the others. After launching their final Playstation production, Twisted Metal 4 in 1999, 989 Studios merged back into SCEA in April, 2000, to work on games for the new Playstation 2.

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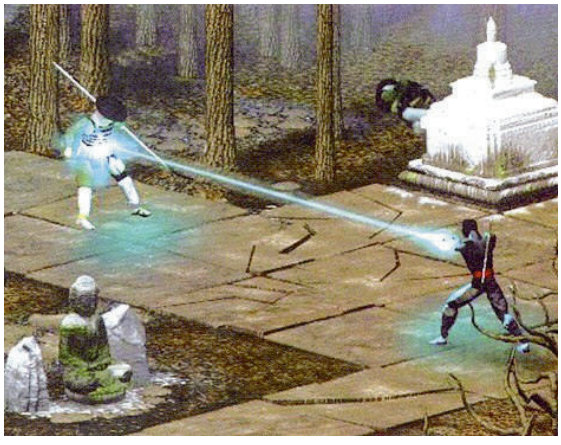
THE LAST NINJA 4

Article by: Jade Avis, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



The Last Ninja 4 was planned to be a new instalment in the popular Commodore 64 series of action games, developed by System 3. In their glory days, the studio was deemed to be one of UK's most successful independent games developers and publishers due to launching several multi-million selling franchises as well as developing games for publishers such as Activision. From 1984 until 1991, System 3 released games mainly for the Commodore 64 platform, such as International Karate (1986) and Flimbo's Quest (1990). The Last Ninja series began in 1987 when it was released for the C64. Players controlled Armakuni, a sole survivor of a ninjutsu clan defeated by an evil Shogun called Kunitoki whom must be killed at the end of the game. Each instalment of the trilogy took place in a variety of locales, starting in Lin Fen (The Last Ninja, 1987); moving onto New York City (The Last Ninja 2, 1988) and ending in Tibet (The Last Ninja 3, 1991). These games included puzzle-solving, e.g. touching a vase in the palace so you safely cross some stairs later on, and fighting enemies with weapons, such as nunchucks, shurikens, a katana and a bamboo cane. After the release of The Last Ninja 3, John Wells (a System 3 programmer) created a short demo to pitch the fourth C64 game, however when he showcased it to System 3 managers they turned it down. The project was picked up again in the late '90 in a bid to create an ambitious Playstation adventure. As we can read in an old preview for the game published in EDGE magazine from February 1998, the team decided that the best way to create the 4th chapter would have been to keep the isometric view from the original titles. According to one of the developers, when they started the project on the Playstation it had the character moving around in a 3D, polygonal world, but getting feedback from fans of the saga made them to rethink the concept and make it more faithful to the previous titles. They were quoted as saying: "Why take a successful product and make it 3D just because that's what the market is dictating?". From the few screenshots available from

the Playstation version we can see that it indeed looked beautiful, with its pre-rendered backgrounds and characters. Players would have been able to explore each level freely, fighting enemies and solving puzzles. Unfortunately issues occurred during the development that are unknown to us, and the game was soon canned. Many years later System 3 tried again to create a new Last Ninja 4 for Playstation 2 and Xbox: shown at E3 2003, but this time it was going with full 3D, in a similar fashion to Ninja Gaiden on the original Xbox. According to an interview by Australian's Nintendo Gamer, System 3 CEO Mark Cale, suggests that this version was also canned because "simply wasn't good enough". In RetroGamer magazine issue 18, Mark added "We've scrapped the 4th game (The Last Ninja Xbox). I felt it wasn't representative of the market. I think you need to do something that recreates that kind of 'wow' factor of the original game, and in my mind it wasn't good enough to wear that badge-so why cash in on a great name?. We may as well leave it as it is". Despite this, The Last Ninja trilogy was planned to be re-released for the Nintendo DS and PSP, but these remakes were also cancelled. The original C64 trilogy did make its way to the Wii's Virtual Console service. System 3 still continues to develop and publish games today - Their current project is Constructor HD for the PlayStation 4 (a remake of the 1997 PC and PlayStation game). As of December 2015, it is unknown whether The Last Ninja 4 will ever return.

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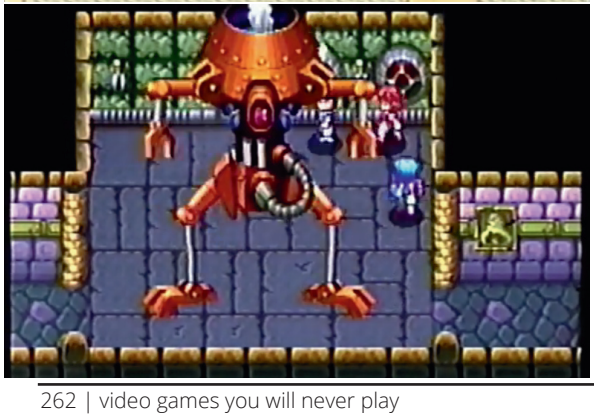
TWINBEE MIRACLE



Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

TwinBee Miracle is a cancelled 2D turn-based RPG that was in development in 1994 / 1995 for the original PlayStation by Konami, as a spin-off of their popular (at the time) TwinBee shoot 'em up series, to became one of the projects planned to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the first TwinBee, released for arcades in 1985. One of the main features for which the series is known for is the charming cartoony character design by Shuzilow HA (Jujiro Hamakawa), with colourful flying mechs and fantasy levels, a design that was very different from the usual "realistic" sci-fi style of most popular shoot 'em ups from the '80s and '90s. Konami used the TwinBee franchise a lot and in mid the '90s they had already published a couple of other spin-offs such as "Pop'n TwinBee: Rainbow Bell Adventures" a platform game for SNES and "TwinBee Taisen Puzzle-Dama" a puzzle game for PlayStation, other than official TwinBee manga, anime series and radio drama. TwinBee Miracle would have been the first RPG set in the TwinBee world, and from the few screens and

videos available we can see that it would have kept the same quirky charm of the main series. They wanted to create a light-hearted role play game with weird enemies and many different fantasy dungeons, cities and world-areas to explore, in a wonderful 2D graphic with full animated cut scenes. The game looked like a nice continuation of classic 16 bit era RPGs, with turn based combats using the iconic TwinBee mechs or on foot, being able to upgrade mechs with new clothes to gain power-ups and special moves. Not much is known about what happened to TwinBee Miracle, but for some reasons Konami decided that this 2D version of their RPG was not going to be published and quietly cancelled it with no explanation. In 1998 they published a new TwinBee RPG but it was a completely different game, with a low poly 3D graphic style that did not maintain the charm of the original cartoony sprites. We can speculate that Konami looked at other 3D RPGs announced in the mid '90s for PlayStation and decided that their 2D TwinBee Miracle would have not be "next gen" enough, cancelling it and creating a new 3D version. In the end the released TwinBee RPG was published in Japan only and we will never know if the cancelled 2D version could have been a much better game or not. In 2004 Konami published another TwinBee RPG titled "TwinBee Dungeon" for mobiles, following the "Mystery Dungeon" rogue like gameplay and as far as October 2015 the last game in the TwinBee series was "Line GoGo! TwinBee", released in May 2013, for iOS and Android.

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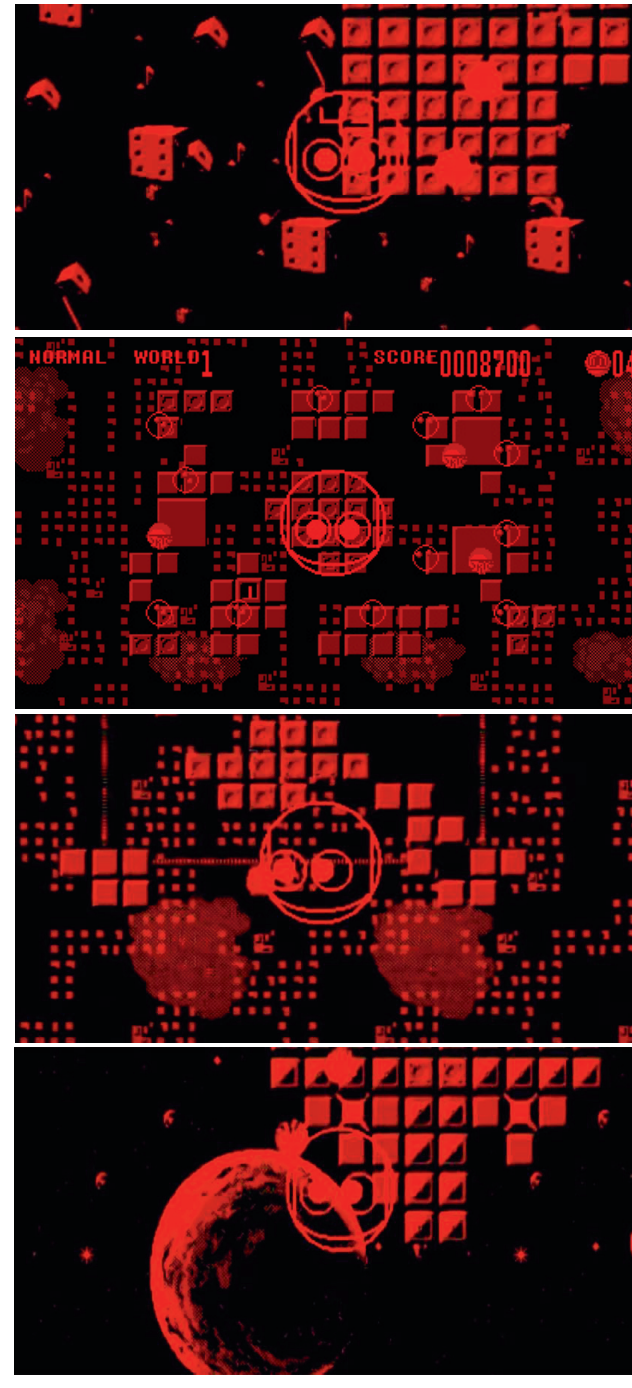
Virtual Boy

Article by: Jeff Wheaton

In 1995, Nintendo released the Virtual Boy console in Japan and North America. It was Nintendo's entry into the 32-bit console market and used a unique two-lens binocular-style design that allowed it to render stereoscopic 3D graphics. However, due to financial limitations, all of the Virtual Boy's graphics were rendered in red and black. The system was also unique in that the power supply was built into the controller, and could be easily switched between using a wall outlet power adapter and a battery pack. The system also featured a headphone port for portable use. These features made the Virtual Boy versatile for use as either a home or portable console, but its large and awkward size made it difficult to use.This difficulty was made even worse when played outside, so it would be difficult to consider it a true portable console. The console, shaped like binoculars and sitting on a stand, required users to look at a red and black screen with no outside light source, causing major eye strain and back issues after playing games on it for an extensive period of time. A promotion allowing potential customers to rent the system at Blockbuster stores in the United States didn't help sales much, either, as many people found the system to be uncomfortable to use. Due to the commercial failure of the Virtual Boy, the system had a relatively microscopic library of games when compared to Nintendo's other console offerings at the time. Even Mario had a limited presence on the system, having only a tennis spinoff and a remake of the Mario Bros. arcade game. Virtual Boy Wario Land was widely considered one of the system's best games, but it still suffered from the monochromatic red and black graphics. While the Virtual Boy would be discontinued less than a year after its release, it would later serve as a partial inspiration for the Nintendo 3DS console, which launched many years later in 2011. The console and some of its games have also made hidden appearances in various Nintendo games such as WarioWare Inc: Mega Microgame$, Super Smash Bros. Melee, and Tomodachi Life. Some Virtual Boy games even saw successors later on, such as Galactic Pinball, which would receive a spiritual successor on the Nintendo DS in the form of Metroid Prime Pinball in 2005. But due to the console's poor sales, there were many Virtual Boy games that would never see the light of day, and even Nintendo soon cancelled a few of the popular franchises they initially planned to develop.

BOUND HIGH

Article by: James Alan Griffiths



There are many reasons why a video game could be cancelled, but they usually only get one shot at becoming finished playable experiences. Those with a passion for what could have been will remember these games, and communities will seek to preserve their memory. But by and large, those that did not make it to retail will be forgotten and neglected by most would-be players. But what happens when a game is given a second chance? Bound High isn't the most significant cancelled game featured in this book. It's not even the most notable of the unreleased Virtual Boy titles that are known to have existed at some point. But because of an enduring enthusiasm for the game and the console that would have bore it, Bound High was eventually afforded a released game in 2012, 15 years after the demise of Nintendo's misguided step into the world of virtual reality. Nintendo worked in close collaboration with developer Japan Systems Supply (mostly known for the Chameleon Twist games on the N64) to create an experience that made good use of what was the Virtual Boy's main strengths. The platform holder were keen at the time to assist third parties in creating experiences that would make the best use of the then-new technology, as well as avoid gimmick titles and what we would term today as shovel ware. Intended to usher in the second generation of Virtual Boy titles, Bound High is a sequel to 1997's Japan only Game Boy title Chalvo 55, a 2D platformer by the same JSS team. Robot Chalvo's unique selling point is that he can roll into a ball and, when transformed, can hit and smash blocks, revealing new areas and hidden secrets. In Bound High, Chalvo would once again use his spherical form to save the world by bouncing upon enemies and bricks from up high. This time around, the player controls the sort of cyborg beach ball from a birds-eye, top-down perspective, which was designed to showcase the 3D effect of the Virtual Boy. Chalvo's mission to thwart enemies would be hindered by the threat of falling off of the differently shaped island levels where gameplay took place, as well as perils like spikes, and adverse whether conditions like high winds and thunder. As well as a straightforward adventure, several other modes were included for longevity, including a golf-style mini game and a sort of score attack challenge. Bound High's eventual cancellation was due largely to the way gamers shunned the console. The second wave of games were shelved because of cited health issues - the primitive 3D effect was said to cause headaches. Despite its cancellation the game was complete and at least ready to be brought to retail. We know this now because its ROM files were eventually uploaded to the Internet in 2010, being playable with the use of an emulator. This fact would have been enough for anyone who wanted a chance to play the title, but this marks only the

beginning for Bound High's resurrection. Two years later, in 2012, a small team consisting of contributors to the Planet Virtual Boy web community would give the game a second chance in the form of an extremely limited physical release. Hardware expert Richard Hutchinson was responsible for writing the game's data to custom made circuit boards that would be required to be meticulously placed inside the physical media that would contain the game's data. Because there is no other way to manufacture Virtual Boy carts and the components that connect the cartridge to the hardware, donor carts had to be sourced via an appeal online. Another contributor was responsible for obtaining old carts. These were cleaned, their innards gutted and their labels wiped clean. Hutchinson then dismantled the individual components. Despite the number of completed Bound High copies offered for sale being under 100, Hutchinson would eventually sacrifice near to a thousand old Virtual Boy carts, many of them old copies of Mario's Tennis (originally bundled with the hardware. This is a testament to how painstaking the process was. Sadly, manufacturing cartridges from new was not an option, so everything had to be recycled. Following this process, the carts were designed with their very own custom created box, the product of Vince Clemente, who had previously created his own boxes for NES collectors (that system's Mario/Duck Hunt console pack-in was never officially given a box by Nintendo, and this made it look like an anomaly on collectors' shelves). Clemente subsequently designed a box for the game to a very high standard that certainly would have looked official to someone who wasn't aware it was created by a fan. Clemente was clearly experienced enough to produce packaging for Bound High. Official promotional art was sourced from the game's initial presentation during E3 1996, but the problem that this presented was that it was poor quality due to its age. The resolution was increased in another painstaking task. The eventual designed picture of Chalvo next to an image of planet Earth looked - incredibly - like a product of its time, a 1996 Virtual Boy game. To make the project more authentic, a manual was created and included, as well as a vintage reproduction Nintendo Power flyer, clear plastic bag to contain the cartridge and cardboard insert, as well as the requisite health and safety booklet. There's even an ESRB rating on the front of the box. In terms of authenticity, this was the closest Bound High could feasibly get to an official release. The fan-release of the game was a labour of love for those involved. Bringing the game to retail was not for the purpose of making money (the team spending a lot more on the project than they would eventually make from sales of the game) but because of an enduring love for Nintendo's ill fated Virtual Boy. It was because of an obsession shared between a small team, whose talents lay in the right areas, and because of circumstance (namely that the ROM code was easily available) that Bound High was given that elusive second chance. As a result, more has been written about this fascinating act than the game itself. The team's project was covered by more mainstream areas of the media too, including a write up on the Wired technology website. There are probably other unreleased titles that deserve it more than this obscure puzzle platformer, the most cult of cult titles. Not bad for an "insignificant" Virtual Boy game.

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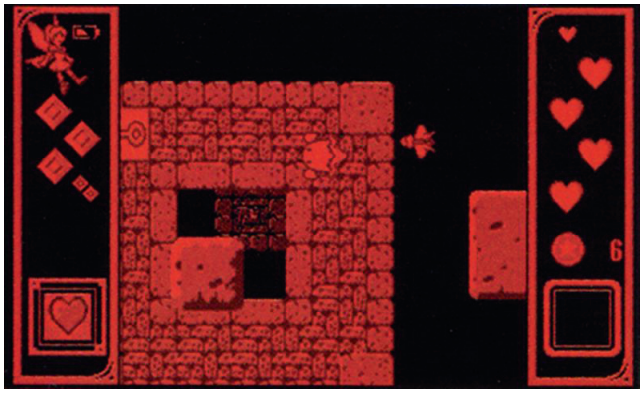
DRAGON HOPPER

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



Dragon Hopper (AKA Jump Dragon in Japan) was an adventure platformer in development for the Virtual Boy by Intelligent System, a Japanese software house known in the West for the Fire Emblem and Paper Mario series. The game was slated to be published in 1996, but in the end it was never released. The game's story was nothing to write about: the evil prime minister of Celestia's Kingdom imprisoned the royal family and Princess Diana, forcing Dragon Prince Dorin to escape from his own soldiers. While fleeing he somehow fell in a hole, landing in the mysterious Land of Faeron. To return to his

world and save his loved ones, the prince would have to defeat the guardians of Faeron and rescue the four Fairy Spirits, which thanks to their elemental powers, were able to turn him into different types of dragons. For example, the earth dragon would have been able to create earthquakes to defeat enemies and shatter fragile tiles, whereas the water dragon could freeze water allowing players to walk on it. Other spells could have been bought (supposing that Dorin collected enough star coins) from magic shops hidden in each of the seven worlds or won in a bonus game. The main novelty of Dragon Hopper was that the levels were pit-like structures seen from an overhead view, more extended in height than in length. Consequently, in order to go through a level, players had to jump high in the air to reach the above platforms, but also had to drop down to the lower floors. It is clear that this type of stage layout was chosen to show off Virtual Boy's "3D" scaling capabilities. Other than that, like in more conventional action-adventure games, players had to collect keys, could talk to various creatures to get clues, and avoid crumbling or dangerous terrain. Intelligent system's Virtual Boy game was playable at the 1995 Nintendo Space World and at E3 1996, some print magazines also had a preview copy of it. From what we know, Dragon Hopper was mostly complete but Nintendo, by the middle of 1996, already considered the Virtual Boy to be a dead console and decided not to release it. Apparently a prototype of the game is in the hands of some private collectors. However, at the time of writing (2015), it is not yet freely available on the internet. After launching Pushmo World in 2014 for Wii U, Intelligent System have been busy finishing Code Name: S.T.E.A.M., a strategy game for 3DS.

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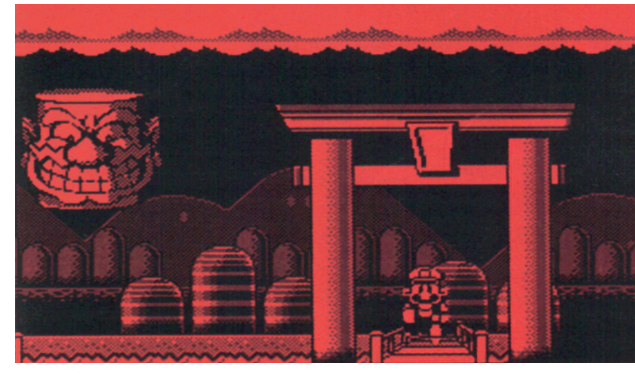
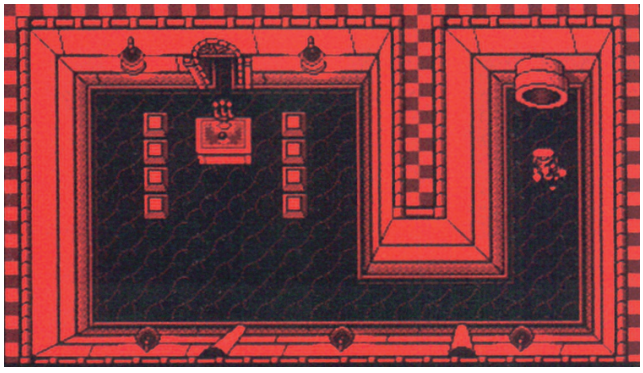
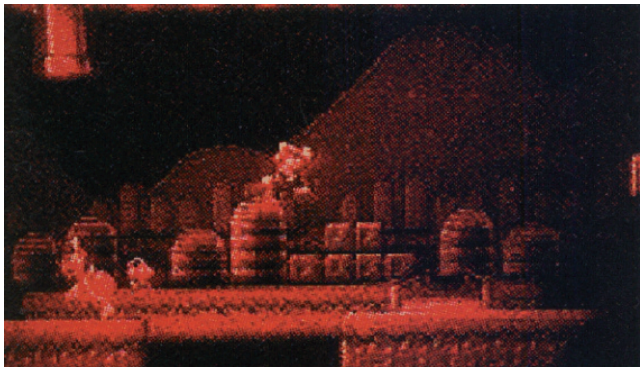
MARIO LAND

Article by: James Alan Griffiths



In the grand scheme of things, not many people have ever picked up a Virtual Boy console, fewer have even heard of it despite the common knowledge surrounding its tragic premature demise. Of the 22 first and third party games released for the VB, one Nintendo mainstay was conspicuous in its absence. Although Mario starred in two titles for the platform, no archetypal Mario platformer was ever released - the only time this has ever happened on Nintendo hardware! Believe it or not, a Mario platformer game was in development for the VB. It was shown briefly in a demo at the winter Consumer Electronics show (CES) in early 1995, where the capabilities of Nintendo's futuristic new console were first shown to a Western audience. However, weak sales of the Virtual Boy would ensure the game would never hit the market. Quite how far along in development this Mario game was will sadly never be known. Judging by the gameplay shown in the video footage, it's not dissimilar to the 2D Mario platformer games that came before it, although the unique selling point of this title was two plane gameplay. Players could walk left to right as well as up and down staircases, thanks to the the parallax effect of the VB hardware allowing users to see at different depths where Mario was on screen at that time. Contrary to the fact that the game is in black and red only, like most VB titles, the visuals are crisp and the animation fluid. The art style is reminiscent of the Wario Land series; massive Thwomp-like creatures with Wario faces can be seen





trying to crush our hero from above, perhaps a clue that he rather than Bowser may have been the main enemy in this Mario iteration, as was the case with Game Boy Mario titles that were released around that time. Also interesting are the depiction of Japanese 'Torii' arches within the level. Usually found outside Shinto temples in Japan, the significance being that they mark the entrance to a sacred place. Whether this is a visual metaphor or part of a larger overall in-game theme theme remains unconfirmed. The most interesting part of the demo comes when Mario heads down one of the usual warp pipes. Upon emerging at the bottom, the perspective shifts to a top down view, similar to Legend of Zelda titles. Quite how much of the game takes place in this dungeon-like underworld isn't revealed in the demo. Mario manages only a few steps before a crack appears and causes a hole to open up. He falls and it swallows him, in a visual effect that was probably added to the demo to show off the 3D capabilities of the Virtual Boy. We're then brought back to the overworld shown before, and the demo finishes with Mario jumping to the top of a flagpole and entering a tower. Nintendo's original plan with the game was to include a mini game reminiscent of the original Mario Bros game (they made a similar move with their Super Mario Bros 3 game on the NES). This mini game was designed to make clever use of depth perception by having two platforms exist: one in the foreground and one in the background, connected on either side of the screen by two pipes. Enemies like Spinys appear that can't be jumped on in the usual Mario way on account of their spiked shells. Mario had to kill koopas, grab their shells, and either throw them along the platform you're standing on, through connecting pipes where they would speed through to the opposite platform, or hurl them across the chasm between the two platforms (Mario is clearly blessed with a good throwing arm and hawk-eye accuracy). Because the game we've come to know as Mario Land Virtual Boy was cancelled, Nintendo quickly scrambled to ensure the system was without a Mario title. The mini-game idea was fleshed out and hurriedly released as a standalone game, Mario Clash, which hit stores in November and December that year in the United States and Japan, respectively. It's likely many of the visual assets, as well as the intro movie, were cut from Mario Land and pasted into what was to become Mario Clash. It would be 2011 by the time Nintendo would release a Mario platformer title with a 3D effect. Although taking place in a totally three dimensional world rather than a side scrolling one, there is a level, 5-2, that features a top down perspective hugely reminiscent of the cancelled VB game. Many regard this to be a tribute to the Zelda series, in its 25th year when the game was released, though it's interesting to speculate this could be an homage to the first time Mario never quite took on three dimensions.

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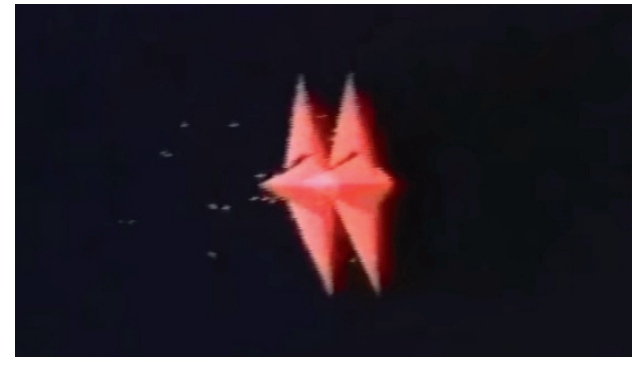
STAR FOX

Article by: James Alan Griffiths

With the release of any new console, it's ultimately up to the platform's publisher to attract potential gamers with the promise of new experiences beyond what they've played before. With the release of the Virtual Boy,



Nintendo had a tough job. Of course, the system's parallax 3D effect could only be witnessed by viewing the games on the console itself. They would be required to offer a wealth of quality games that not only looked great, but also appeared to make the most of the system's unique selling point. Nintendo clearly considered an entry in their then-relatively new Starfox series the sort of game that would sell systems, and prove to consumers the advantages of adding an extra dimension to the action. Space and terrain based battles could be more exciting in three dimensions. 3D visuals could afford the player a degree of accuracy and precision not possible on a flat screened television set. The only footage of the game that made it into the public domain was captured at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1995. Taken secretly on a shaky hand held cam, it was never intended to be seen outside of the expo. Anyone familiar with the SNES Starfox game would be immediately familiar with the minuscule amount of footage that was shown. The Starfox team's Arwing space fighting planes weave around the screen, making evasive maneuvers. It is probably safe to speculate that the game would feature the series' anthropomorphic mercenaries Fox, Peppy, Falco and Slippy fighting the evil monkey scientist Andross and his army in on rails dog fights. The Virtual Boy featured similar, albeit slightly weaker, technology as the SNES console, and made use of the Mode 7 chip, which allowed for cutting edge (at the time) 3D graphics and gameplay. Sadly, but not surprisingly, there is a slight blur and 'double vision' effect to the footage; Attendees to CES who viewed the video of the game in motion would be handed 3D spectacles to at least give a visual representation of how the games would look on a Virtual Boy console, but of course this can't be replicated when viewed over the internet. The demise of the Virtual Boy is widely known. The console was on shelves in Japan and the US for a few short months, and practically everything shown in the CES footage would be canned. Too much money lost already on designing, mass producing the product and a heavy marketing campaign marketing meant that development on key titles was halted and Starfox on the VB would never see the light of day. Nintendo's faith in the idea of a 3D space shooting game would lead them to publish Red Alarm, developed with their close collaboration, by T&E Soft. Although it offered a solid experience, it suffered from crude-looking wireframe visuals, and lacked the charm of a Starfox game. Of course, the VB iteration of Starfox wasn't the only game to be cancelled around that time - the home console sequel destined for the SNES was pulled from release at the last minute, in favour of a completely re-designed game on Nintendo's next generation N64. It may perhaps be a comforting thought for those who really wanted a Virtual Boy version outing for Fox and company, is that perhaps the cancelled title was sacrificed in order to make Starfox 64 the best game it could be.

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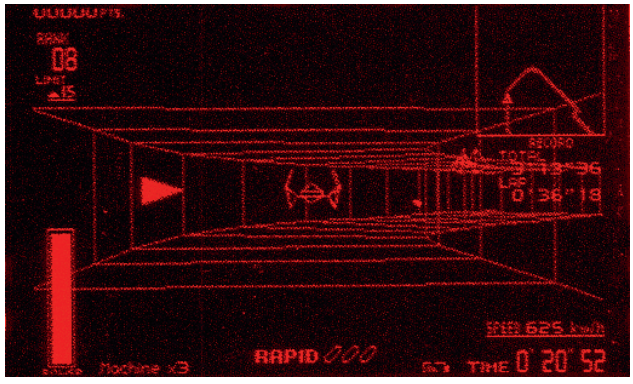
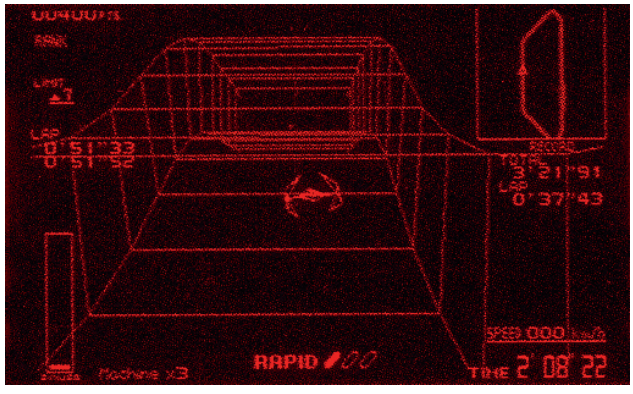
ZERO RACERS

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Zero Racers (G-Zero) is a cancelled game for Nintendo's Virtual Boy. It was in development alongside F-Zero X for the Nintendo 64, and was planned to be released along with games like Bound High and Dragon Hopper. It





was to be in a full 3D environment with a Star Fox-like camera. The game was previewed by Nintendo Power magazine and was seen at E3 1996. Its gameplay was very similar to what gamers had experienced in other F-Zero games, although this version had one key difference: instead of having a futuristic aesthetic, in Zero Racers players raced through the three physical dimensions of space in the turning tunnels of the game's tracks. Nevertheless, the classic power gauge was still present— as usual, it decreased a bit with every collision, but could be reloaded by flying over an energy track on one edge of the tunnel. Visually, Zero Racers presented us with wire-frame graphics, which reminded many gamers of another title for the Virtual Boy: Red Alarm. The HUD (Heads Up Display) showed the vehicle's speed, lap times, position, energy and turbos, as well as a map of the track. Players had four different vehicles to choose from. Each one had different attributes: there was the Falcon (Captain Falcon's machine), Stingray and Goose, and instead of Golden Fox, Origammy joined the crew. The extremely light Origammy, with its amazing acceleration and swift cornering, was the best choice for tunnels with a lot of turns, with a top speed of 862 kilometres per hour. Goose was excellent for high-speed tracks (it had a slow acceleration and modest corner characteristics); the Falcon was a very well-balanced ship (it had medium acceleration and good cornering), and Stingray had better cornering but a slower acceleration than the Falcon. It was good for narrower tunnels. Zero Racers offered two gameplay modes. In "Grand Prix" mode, players had to race one of three circuits (or cups) with five tracks each. Additionally, before each race, the "VTR" mode gave you the chance to check out all the obstacles in the track while the camera made a complete lap through the tunnel. Last but not least, "Practice" mode allowed the player to prepare for a Grand Prix without having to compete with other racers. Finally, this game was rumoured to be the first F-Zero title to have a two-player mode. Nevertheless, despite being planned for a fall 1996 release in North America, it was cancelled due to the poor sales (and reception) of the Virtual Boy.

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Nintendo 64

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

The Nintendo 64 was Nintendo's third foray into the home console market, and one of the most popular systems to date. It served as a successor to the Nintendo Entertainment System and the Super Nintendo. It's name comes from the newly developed 64-bit central processing unit, which was designed to improve the 3D capability of the system, and was released in June 1996 in Japan, September 1996 in North America, March 1997 in Europe and Australia, and December 1997 in Brazil. Despite having dominated the home and portable video game console market during the 8-bit and 16-bit eras, Nintendo had a difficult time with the release of the Nintendo 64. This was due, quite famously, to Sony entering the market with the PlayStation, the first home console to actually dethrone Nintendo as the leader of the video game market. Even though the N64's had superior graphics and sound capabilities, Sony had an advantage in the format of its games. The Nintendo 64 was the industry's last major home console to use the cartridge as its primary storage format, while the PlayStation used CD-ROMs instead. This meant that Sony's games could be larger and inexpensive to manufacture, which combined with the lower royalties required by Sony made for cheaper game production all around. Nintendo's difficulties with third party developers, the higher cost of cartridges, and the cooler image that Sony was able to imprint on their console (thanks to titles for young adults) were some detrimental factors that led to decreased game production for the N64. Despite ending up second place in the "console wars", the Nintendo 64 is home of some of the games that are widely considered to the best ever created. Thanks to its focus on multiplayer (unlike the PS1, the N64 had four controller ports instead of two), it was quite the sensation amongst gamers with many friends to play with. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (1998) is, quite possibly, its most famous title. Considered to be one of the greatest and most influential games of all time, it managed to sell 1.14 million copies in Japan, and over 7.6 million copies worldwide. The console's most popular game, though, was also its first: the great Super Mario 64 (1996) actually managed to sell 11.62 million copies worldwide, and is considered to have revolutionised 3D platform games. Even though a handful of third-party companies left Nintendo (most famously, Square, which had released all the Final Fantasy games till the sixth one for the Super Nintendo), the N64 had quite a varied catalogue of games. It's most clear weakness was a serious lack of RPGs, racing sims and good fighting games. The console's game library consists of 388 official releases in total. Some of the most memorable and re-playable titles for the machine are Pilotwings 64 (1996), Wave Race 64 (1996), Mario Kart 64 (1996, a multiplayer classic), Star Fox 64 (1997, arguably the best game in the series), Diddy Kong Racing (1997), Turok: Dinosaur Hunter (1997), GoldenEye 007 (1997, the first truly great First Person Shooter exclusive for console), Blast Corps (1997), Mario Party (1998), Banjo Kazooie (1998, Rare demonstrated they were as good as Nintendo at crafting 3D platform games), F-Zero X (1998, one of the fastest racing games of its time), Jet Force Gemini (1999), Super Smash Bros (1999), The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (2000, Ocarina of Time's darker and more complex sequel), Perfect Dark (2000, GoldenEye's spiritual successor), Paper Mario (2000, a visually interesting and fun RPG), Conker's Bad Fur Day (2001, a surprisingly original and fun parody game) and many more. There's no doubt that you have heard of at least one of these great games before even if you've never played them. A few of the less known, hidden gems for the N64 are titles like Mischief Makers (1997), Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon (1997), Snowboard Kids (1997), BattleTanx (1998), Body Harvest (1998), Fighters Destiny (1998), Space Station Silicon Valley (1998), Bangai-O (1999), Harvest Moon 64 (1999), Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness (1999), Ogre Battle 64 (1999), Shadowgate 64 (1999) and Shiren the Wanderer 2 (2000). The last game to be published for the N64 in USA was Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 on August 2002. If there's anything else the Nintendo 64 is famous for, it's its accessories. Apart from the machine itself and its infamously odd-looking controller, there's the most infamous of all accessories: the Nintendo 64 Disk Drive. It was originally announced in 1995, before the Nintendo 64's launch, and was finally released in Japan on December 1999. Only ten games were released for the peripheral, making it a commercial failure. It plugged into the underside of the console, and allowed the Nintendo 64 to use proprietary 64 MB magnetic disks for expanded and rewritable data storage, and a real-time clock. The concept was sound; the games that were released for the accessory were quite good and the idea of the Randnet (the machine's online service... yes, back in 1999!) was ahead of its time. Nevertheless, due to all the delays, the release of the add-on late in the console's life, and the fact that it was available only in Japan, meant that the 64DD was doomed from the start. Despite "losing" to the PlayStation, the Nintendo 64's sales weren't bad per se. Worldwide, the console sold about 33 million units total; 5.50+ million in Japan, 20+ million in the Americas, and almost 7 million in Europe and Australia. Obviously, compared to the PlayStation's sales (102+ million machines sold worldwide) these numbers can look a little meager, but there's no denying that there are quite a bit of Nintendo 64 machines in homes all around the world. The Nintendo 64 is still one of the most loved video game consoles ever created, despite all

its obvious weaknesses. Its library of games is, to this day, quite magnificent, and its graphics were awesome for their time. It's probably because of the console's small yet interesting catalogue of games that the long list of cancelled N64 games look even more fascinating. With Nintendo 64 owners looking for years at screenshots of games that would never be released and waiting for the next must-have title, those lost projects became somewhat legendary. In the following pages we'll show you a few of those cancelled Nintendo 64 games we'll never play.

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64 WARS

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

64 Wars is a cancelled Wars sequel, slated to be released for the Nintendo 64 on January 1999. The Advance Wars series became quite popular in the U.S. and Europe thanks to the Game Boy Advance games, but it was known to the Japanese since the NES, with the name of FAMICOM Wars, originally published on the Famicom back in 1988. The game is a strategic turn-based RPG where the player fights with their army against the enemy, carefully planning their strategic moves. Even though the rights of the Wars series were property of Intelligent Systems, Nintendo let Hudson work on the Nintendo 64 version in the late '90s. After all, they'd already worked on a remake of Game Boy Wars, and eventually made both GameBoy Wars 2 and 3. Unfortunately, little is known about the N64 project; the images we managed to find were taken from various Japanese magazines, and the game was shown (for the first and only time) in non-playable form at the Nintendo Space World 1999 (luckily, there's a VHS rip available online). The style of 64 Wars seems to have been very similar to its predecessors: a 2D map was used for troop movement, while the battles were shown in a 3D engine. Additionally, it would have also included land, sea and air battles, as well as a map editor to create your own war zones. The most interesting part of the 64 version, though, was the possibility to connect the N64 cartridge to GameBoy Wars 2, to unlock new features. The GB title was able to connect to the N64 version through the GB Transfer Pack, which was a peripheral originally used with Pokemon Stadium. With this peripheral, people would have been able to begin a match of Wars on the N64, continue it on the GB, and finish it back on the home console. Moreover, one can actually find data regarding this option still hidden away in the code of the GB cartridge. In the end, despite the promise this new title brought, 64 Wars was cancelled without any official explanation. Maybe the rights transfer between Intelligent System and Hudson proved to be problematic, or maybe the N64 game didn't match Nintendo's quality standards.

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BLADES OF PASSAGE

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Blades of Passage, codenamed Project Edge (also known as Thu Lu Khan), is a cancelled multiplayer Action-RPG planned for the Nintendo 64 DD, planned to use the magnetic disk drive that allowed for both rewritable data and cheaper storage. The game was originally intended to be part of the North American launch line-up for the peripheral. Its core focus was to be four-player multiplayer throughout the entire campaign. There wasn't any kind of anchor character, but the prototype levels were built around short melee combat and teamwork. Development was heavily focused on building a "vertical slice" of the game, so elements like the characters and overall story were just pitches at the time. Richard Knight, developer at Pixelplay Interactive during the latter part of the game's development, recalls some details about the project on his website,

moogle.net: “By the time I arrived at the studio, the project was in a state of flux. Nintendo first postponed and then cancelled the USA launch of the 64-DD, and then not too long after 64MB cartridges became a feasible reality, the marching orders were given for all projects to go to the GameCube instead if possible. I was hired very late into development as a 3D Modeller, with the eye to move over to Design when it made sense. I started to contribute some models and level environments, but slowdowns in the project forced me to switch to campaign and story design during the final months. (Tools in the days of N64 were tremendously primitive compared to today, so I suppose this wasn’t surprising.) Project Edge was nowhere near finished, but as the founding and sole project of the studio, there was a lot of hope behind it until the end. Pixelplay had a tremendous sense of start-up pride, and working directly with Nintendo (on an RPG no less!) was a dream for many developers – myself included – and there were people on this project before me for 3 years or more! Losing the project changed the fabric of the company more or less on the spot. Shortly after Project Edge was shelved, the studio was reformed into Orbital Media, and N64 hardware was changed in for early Game Boy Advance development kits”. For most of the development period, the characters were not really story driven, rather they were vehicles for different play-styles. Which characters work best together? What happens to team-play? These were the important questions asked by the development team, since Blades of Passage was designed for multi-player gaming. Games like Goldeneye were very successful on the N64 and Secret of Mana's multi-player cooperative mode on the SNES was celebrated, giving inspiration to the team. Blades of Passage was very much built with a "MP first" mindset, even if a single-player option existed. For development purposes one could play alone, but some puzzles require multiple players, so “bot” characters would have been implemented. The game was built with a very heavy Mayan influence. In fact, the original development team actually travelled to see some of the ruins for research. The prototype levels (snowy mountain, dense jungle, dungeon) all were deliberately based on the feel and structures of that ancient civilization. Using Secret of Mana as the primary inspiration for the game, the levels were designed to be large but divided. There would have been a world map and an airship to use at some point, but development just never got that far. Like Secret of Mana, there was definitely a timing factor to combat. Characters could combo attacks together with the right button presses and timing. Combat was all real-time, and a lot of development effort was put into making moment-to-moment combat feel great. Additionally, there were some basic RPG systems, but most of the effort to that point was spent on combat, movement, and the level/monster design. The heavy influence of Secret of Mana on Blades of Passage is fairly obvious; nevertheless, there was no direct relationship between that game and Passage other than it’s original pitch as a four-player Secret of Mana exclusive to the N64. Multi-player without a dongle was perceived as a big advantage for the console and Nintendo still invested quite heavily back then in projects. Pixelplay as a studio had a bit of reputation to back up the concept since the studio president was involved in the creation of Tetrisphere, which is also how Neil Voss came to do the music. As far as it’s known, despite some rumours, holding out for the Gamecube was not a financial possibility for Nintendo or the studio. Devkits were at least six months out, Nintendo wasn't interested in throwing more money into a "maybe", and the studio did not have the financial backing to fund development itself. The Game Boy Advance, on the other hand, was much easier to get prototype kits for and did not require expensive 3D workstations. In theory they could have made other games faster and become self-sustainable, but a continuation of the Blades of Passage development was never made for any of the new systems. It’s worth mentioning that when the studio was

reformed into Orbital Media (which went on to make a series of games for the Gameboy Advance and the Nintendo DS) some of their new projects were also cancelled. These include Juka and the Monophonic Menace for DS, Pirate Battle for the GBA and DS, Racing Gears 2 for DS, all canned. Before to close down Orbital Media released Racing Gear Advance, Juka and the Monophonic Menace and Scurge: Hive.

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Huge thanks to Richard Knight for sharing information on such an interesting project.
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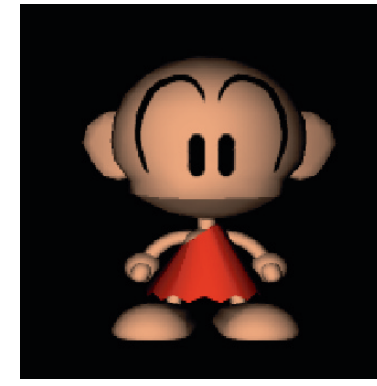
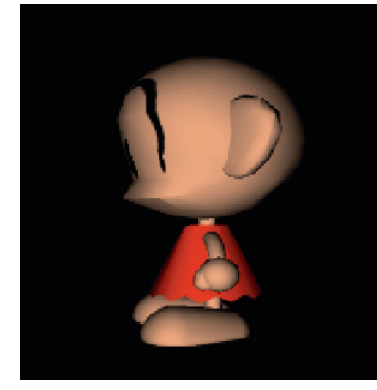
BONK 64 (ULTRA GENJIN)

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





Bonk (also known as “PC Genjin” in Japan and “BC Kid” in Europe) is the name of the main character in a series of platforming games that was started on the PC Engine in 1990 when the first title, Bonk's Adventure, was developed by Hudson. Bonk soon became the mascot of Hudson in an 8/16-bit market filled with mascot-platformers (Mario, Sonic, etc.) and they released a few sequels for PC Engine and Super Famicom. When Nintendo announced their Ultra 64 in late 1994 many Japanese companies started to plan 3D versions of their main properties for the 64 bit console and with the showcase of Mario 64 it looked like 3D platforming was finally finding its roots. At the time Hudson had a very good relationship with Nintendo, in 1997 they released Dual Heroes and Bomberman 64, while sometime later they also co-developed Mario Party together, a title that became a popular hit with the N64 user-base. What most gamers do not know is that in 1995 Hudson in cooperation with A.I Studio (the team that already worked on other PC Genjin titles) were also planning a new, exclusive Bonk game for the Ultra 64, tentatively titled “Ultra Genjin”, that would have been the first 3D Bonk game to be released. Unfortunately the Ultra Genjin team was still not used to creating 3D platforming games and they were not sure about how to develop this new version of Bonk or how to implement its characteristic 2D design into 3D graphics. In the end they decided to cancel the project and focus on other titles. The images you can see on this page are the only remaining documents on the development of Ultra Genjin with the first draft of Bonk in 3D. After some years Hudson and A.I took the early work they had done on Bonk 64 to develop Bomberman Hero which was finally released in 1998 on the N64. As we can read in an interview by GDRI with Shouichi Yoshikawa:
"GDRI: What happened with Ultra Genjin [N64]?
Yoshikawa: Ultra Genjin was being planned during the game industry’s transition from 2D to 3D games. I studied the practical aspects of this quite a bit, but I think that nobody really knew what should be done with games at the time. As a result of trial and error, we were able to adapt the design for Ultra Genjin to Bomberman Hero."
The last Bonk game released for consoles remains Cho Genjin 2, published in 1995 for the Super Famicom and the series never had a proper 3D incarnation. Other 3D Bonk games were cancelled many years later including Bonk 3D for Nintendo 3DS and Bonk: Brink of Extinction for Wii, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. Because of several financial losses from the mid-2000’s Hudson sold most of its shares to Konami and in 2012 Hudson Soft Co. Ltd completely ceased to exist and fully merged with Konami, losing all of their IPs. It’s currently unknown if we’ll ever see another Bonk game in the future.

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CABBAGE

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Cabbage (Kyabetsu in Japan) is a cancelled pet breeding/raising game that would have been somehow similar to the popular Bandai's Tamagotchi (1996) or Activision's Little Computer People (1985), originally intended for release on the Nintendo 64 Disk Drive. It was being developed at Nintendo / HAL Laboratory from 1997 to 2000 by Shigesato Itoi (responsible for the Earthbound series) and Tsunekazu Ishihara (founder of Creatures Inc. in 1995 and producer of the Pokémon series), as well as Shigeru Miyamoto himself. Unfortunately, the game never reached completion for various reasons and Nintendo have never shown any images from the project, and only a few details about its gameplay. In Cabbage players were given the task of raising a creature of some kind, exactly what type of creature was never revealed. They were able (amongst other tasks) to buy it things (new toys, new clothes, etc.) and feed it. The game concept was very unique in a number of ways. For example, it would have utilized the N64DD's internal clock in order to keep the virtual world functioning even while the console was turned off. This meant that a player could potentially leave the house for a few hours, and find that his or her creature had evolved and changed considerably in his or her absence. To enable more portability and constant monitoring of Cabbage's creature, the game would also have been linkable to the Game Boy via N64's Transfer Pack, an item that was later used to link Pokèmon Stadium N64 to Pokèmon Red and Blue on the GB. The creature could be downloaded to the Game Boy, where it would remain with (and be nurtured by) the player throughout the day, before being transferred back to the home console whenever the player chose. Creatures would also have been able to visit other owners' virtual worlds. Itoi mentioned that he was looking for an "explosive" idea for the game, something that would have been different to what everyone had expected. As the original GameBoy does not have an internal memory, Nintendo planned to have some sort of GB cart version of Cabbage along with the N64 version, to be able to connect the 2 games together. Additionally, it was planned that extra game expansions would be released, these would contain different toys and gameplay elements for Cabbage to interact with (including swings, slides and ponds), as well as additional "events" for Cabbage to explore. Miyamoto has even said that players would have been able to copy their creature's toys onto blank disks to share with friends. However, he has provided conflicting information as to whether these expansions would have taken the form of retail N64DD disks, Game Boy cartridges, download stations in real-life stores or updates via 64DD's randnet service. Although Cabbage was meant to be playable at Space World 2000, no demo or footage ever surfaced. Miyamoto claims that Itoi and Ishihara got too busy to work on the project (they were also working on Mother 3 and Pokèmon titles), and so Cabbage was dropped. Miyamoto said that many elements of the would-be Cabbage eventually made it into other titles, such as Nintendogs. Cabbage also seems to possess many similarities with the published Animal Crossing / Animal Forest (internal clock system, items to buy for your character, being able to visit other people's towns, etc.) and Hey You! Pikachù! for the Nintendo 64. Perhaps, following the low popularity of the 64DD add-on, Cabbage had to be converted to a less-ambitious title. Hopefully one day we could be able to see something more from Cabbage. After working on Mother 3 it's currently unknown if Shigesato Itoi will ever produce another game, while Tsunekazu Ishihara is still working as president of The Pokémon Company and producer for many Pokemon games.

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CATROOTS

Article by: Ryan Hamann

CatRoots was a game in development for the Nintendo 64 by Nintendo's second party studio Marigul. Marigul was a development conglomerate specifically put in place to fund smaller game design studios with a strong emphasis on the creation of experimental and unique content. Marigul has since been liquidated and split into the studios Ambrella (creators of many Pokémon spin-off games, such as Hey You, Pikachu!, Pokémon Channel, and the Pokémon Rumble series) and Noise (creators of the Custom Robo series), as well as the now-defunct studios Clever Trick (creators of cancelled N64 strategy game Echo Delta), Param (creators of Doshin the Giant), and Saru Brunei (creators of Cubivore). It is unknown which of these teams was working on Catroots, specifically, or what personnel were attached to the project.

CatRoots was only shown on one monitor in Nintendo's booth during E3 of 2000, but little is known of the title outside of what can be gleaned from this one video. What was shown appeared to be a pre-rendered cutscene, as it was far smoother and more graphically-advanced than what the then-aging N64 could realistically output.

The teaser trailer depicted a highly-stylized cartoon mouse chasing a frightened cat throughout the city with increasingly absurd weaponry (such as a mallet, shuriken, and a flamethrower). It was quite obviously a send-up to the classic Tom & Jerry cartoons (or, perhaps a bit more on-the-nose, the Simpsons parody duo Itchy & Scratchy). The characters' reactions were comical and exaggerated in the classic Hanna-Barbera style, and the game appeared to be quite violent, as the cat in the teaser was quite viscerally bludgeoned, impaled, and burnt to a crisp. It was likely coincidence that this title was in development at about the same time as another second party studio production for Nintendo featuring a hyper-violent, darkly comic spoof of classic-era cartoons, Conker's Bad Fur Day, although this similarity could be a factor that contributed to this game never seeing the light of day. Other than the one video, which was recorded via camcorder off of the screen in Nintendo's booth, no other information about the game was brought to light at that E3. The booth distributed no information about its development, projected release, or story, and even those manning the booth where it was being shown knew nothing about the title. It was never shown at conferences after its debut appearance and was never officially announced for release. It was, perhaps, a casualty of the failure of the 64DD that did not have the promise and potential to make the transition onto the GameCube.

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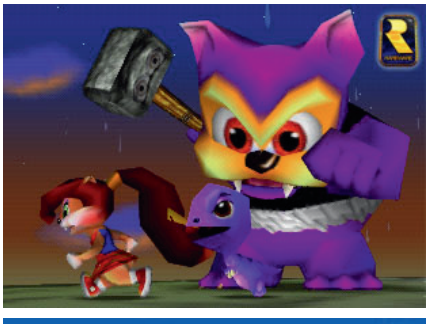
CONKER'S QUEST (TWELVE TALES)

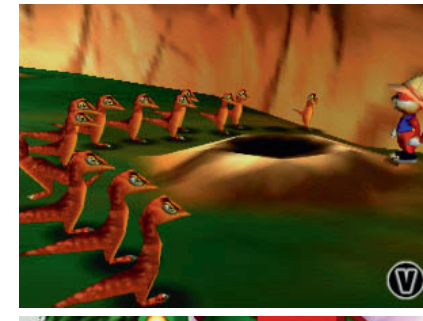
Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

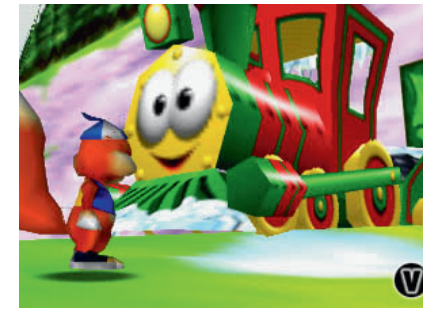
Twelve Tales: Conker 64 was a cute 3D platformer developed by Rare for Nintendo 64, starring a couple of

friendly squirrels. Interestingly, while the game looked like a lighthearted, family friendly cartoon, many of the programmers involved in the project had worked before on the ultra-violent Killer Instinct series. This “kiddy” version of Conker was never released on the N64, but the project was heavily changed and later became the cult classic, controversial and adult-only Conker’s Bad Fur Day. How could such a cute platformer be transformed into one of the most politically-incorrect games ever released on a Nintendo console? Originally called Conker’s Quest, the game was first presented along with Banjo Kazooie at E3 1997 and later that year in November at Nintendo Spaceworld. Rare was already popular among Nintendo fans thanks to their Donkey Kong Country series on the SNES and new N64 platform games from the same studio were quite hyped. In April 1998, before Conker’s new appearance at E3, IGN reported that the name of the game was changed to Twelve Tales: Conker 64. According to an official Nintendo press release in May 1998, the title was supposed to launch within the year. However, the Conker team probably spent most of the next sixteen months completely reworking the game. While Conker looked like a fun platform adventure, many saw the squirrel’s game as a less interesting, more-of-the-same kiddy version of Banjo-Kazooie. As we can read from IGN’s first preview of Conker from E3 1997: "Conker's Quest looks a lot like Banjo-Kazooie, and in many ways plays a lot like it too -- and in that respect, it plays a lot like Super Mario 64, too. But the game has the amazing ability to make gamers feel as if they're playing through Disney's movie version of Bambi. [...] The biggest difficulty at the show was determining the differences between Banjo-Kazooie and Conker's Quest. Having played B-K first, N64.com reporters felt that they liked unanimously B-K better." A few members from the Conker team remember how they were also impressed when they first saw Banjo (at the time, teams at Rare were not permitted to see what other teams were working on. A former Rare employee told us that “one of the teams even had a telescope set up, to spy on the other office!”) and they started to have some doubts about what they did until that point with Conker. After mid-1998 things went quiet for Conker and some rumors even speculated that it was being cancelled, but Rare, in a Q&A on their official page, strongly denied this allegation. It was clear that Twelve Tales needed to do something different to survive against all the similar 3D platformers, and that’s when Chris Seavor (at the time working on art for the project) took over the main design and proposed a new edgy and humoristic version of Conker. Rare’s co-founders, Tim and Chris Stamper, gave their ok. Meanwhile, in June 1999, Rare released another Conker game on the Game Boy Color titled “Conker's Pocket Tales”, using the original cute version of our beloved squirrel. This GBC version would have been an anticipation of Conker’s family friendly style and themes, initially planned to be released along the home-console title, but things were changing and the portable game was published way before the N64 one, reviewed by gaming press with average scores. In November 1999, Rare removed almost all of the references of Twelve Tales from their website, undoubtedly because the original N64 project was already long gone. Finally, in January 2000, IGN reported that not only was Twelve Tales now renamed to ”Conker’s Bad Fur Day”, but also that it “has undergone a massive makeover and is, as one insider puts it, a whole new game from Twelve Tales: Conker 64”. The rest is history. Bad Fury Day was eventually released in March 2001, with great reviews but low sales, being an adult-only title and one of the latest games on a console that was being replaced by a new generation. In an interview with Gamekia, Chris Seavor confirmed that Twelve Tales was cancelled because it was too similar to other Nintendo and Rare platformers: “There were a few problems with this game, but overall the main problem was Banjo being a similar type of game, and BOTH being a take on the Mario 64 format. A crowded market indeed”. However, Twelve Tales still had some unique features, unseen in the released game. Rare wanted their new title to be an “interactive cartoon”, in which the main characters’ moods and expressions changed according to what happened in the



immediate surroundings. These reactions provided beneficial gameplay hints, like warning the player of an impending danger. Conker also wore a different themed hat in each stage. In the mines, for example, he used a light-equipped mining helmet. In the beginning of the single player mode, players had to choose between one of two rodents (Conker and Barri), with basic gameplay changing depending on the character selected. Conker could attack with his tail, open crates, climb and shake trees, perform a ground pound and a charged uppercut, run on all fours, and so on. Berri couldn't do some of these moves, but she was accompanied by a purple dinosaur that, if regularly feed as some kind of Tamagotchi (he had his own energy bar), could be instructed to fight for her (interestingly, a baby dinosaur also kills enemies for Conker in the Bad Fur Day prehistoric stage). A few special items such as a slingshot, a magnet, a wand, an umbrella, and a shovel (used to travel underground), probably obtained after a boss fight or found inside one of the stages, would have granted more abilities to the main characters. In contrast to Bad Fur Day, the story of Twelve Tales was quite simple: Conker the squirrel and his girlfriend Berri the chipmunk must recover 100 housewarming presents, stolen by a gang of animal hoodlums (probably led by a dark wizard that can be seen in a trailer), which also kidnapped their friends. A cooperative mode for Conker's story was also available, with the second player using an owl called Knowit (which in single player mode gave useful hints to the player). The bird could pick up the squirrel and fly him to high places. However, sometimes the two had the possibility to split up and complete different objectives on their own. It's not clear if, while playing as Berri, players also had a coop mode available using the owl, or if the second player would play as her purple dinosaur. Like Bad Fur Day, Twelve Tales featured a deathmatch mode in which players could fight each other with physical attacks or weapons such as bombs. Twelve Tales' four big worlds were accessed through a book that contained six presents to collect for each page. Other pages could be found inside some levels. Planned stages included a WindMill pasture (which probably became Windy in BFD), Cuckoo village, Popcorn mines, a volcano, a prehistoric jungle, a gladiatorial arena, the wild west, sea and ice locations, and so on. Only two bosses of Twelve Tales, a cyclops (which probably became Buga the Knut in BFD) and K.O. the Kat (a purple feline), were shown by Rare in promotional videos and images. Levels also featured several unique methods of transportation that could be used to travel faster or reach normally inaccessible areas, like gliders, jet-powered surfboards, unicycles, kites, hook-and-wire roller coasters and rolling barrels. The main objectives of the game seem to have been similar to other 3D platformers: in the first world, for example, presents were typically obtained by collecting balloons (eight in this case), catching animals, following tutorials (that featured a scarecrow as a teacher, as in Bad Fur Day) or hitting enemies with your slingshot. Furthermore, according to an old preview from Nintendo Power, it was possible to change the game time, which affected "play in a number of ways, like bringing on challenging foes with the onset of night". Interestingly, some leftover graphics from Twelve Tales can be still be found in Bad Fur Day's ROM. In 2005, Chris Seavor directed Bad Fur Day's remake Conker: Live and Reloaded for the original Xbox. After working on some other unreleased games (a couple of Conker sequels, Urchin, Perfect Dark Core, Ordinary Joe), he left Rare in 2012 to form its own indie studio, Gory Detail. As of 2016, Seavor is currently busy finishing a 3DS and Wii U platformer: The Unlikely Legend of Rusty Pup.





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DESERT ISLAND 64

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Desert Island 64 (sometimes referred to as "No Man's Island") was an interesting simulation RPG in development by Genki. It was first announced by Imagineer at Nintendo's Shoshinkai trade show in 1996 under the title of "Super Real Island." It was planned for release in 1999 for Nintendo 64's Disk Drive add-on. Genki is best known for racing games like their Shutoko Battle and Tokyo Xtreme series and in 1997 they released Multi Racing Championship, one of the first racing titles for Nintendo 64 published by Imagineer. In the mid-'90s Imagineer were best known for having published such games as Populus and Sim City for Nintendo consoles in Japan and they later decided to fully support the N64 with new and original titles. We don't know if it was Imagineer that approached Genki to ask them to develop Desert Island 64 or if it was the other way around and information on this lost game is quite scarce. IGN64 wrote that it was meant to be present at Shoshinkai with a playable demo, but as far as we know it was never shown in there. This mysterious project soon vanished from Imagineer's release list and it was later cancelled without any official reasons, maybe it was because of 64DD's failure. Some new information was published in magazines such as Germany's Nintendo Fun Vision in 1998. From what we can gather it seems that the main concept of Desert Island 64 was somewhat similar to Survival Kids (1999) for the Gameboy Color and Lost in Blue (2005) for the Nintendo DS (both developed by Konami) along with some strategy elements inspired by Populus and Sim City. After a shipwreck players had to survive on a desert island, finding food and potable water, exploring the area and managing resources. Desert Island 64 was going to be a really complex and ambitious game, in which players had to observe and interact with the evolution chain of the island, from plants to animals. The main gameplay was supposed to be a mix of open world exploration, platforming, survival and life simulation. Players would have been able to explore the island, search for fruit, hunt for animals, cultivate the land with vegetables, plant new trees and raise animals in order to create a new civilization. To achieve this level of simulation, and to save all the changes made by players to the flora and fauna of the island, the game would have used the features of the 64DD which had more space than traditional cartridges, rewritable discs and an internal real-time clock. The only screenshots available show an early prototype with almost no scenario. The main character and the animals have a very strange and surreal design and we can only speculate that the events and areas planned for the game were going to be really original. In 1999 IGN64 wrote that Imagineer were pondering whether or not to resurrect the project for Dreamcast, but unfortunately it was destined to never see the light of day. Genki and Imagineer developed and published other games for Nintendo 64, such as Fighter Destiny, Zool and Quest 64. They also started to release games for Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation under the name Imadio. Imagineer's latest console titles were Aqua Aqua and Might and Magic: Day of the Destroyer for PlayStation 2. It seems that today they are only working on mobile phone games for the Japanese market.

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DIE HARD 64

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Becoming a legendary lost game after unconfirmed rumors of screenshots appearing oi gaming magazines, Die Hard 64 was one of three Nintendo 64 projects in development by Bits Studios, along with RiQa and Thieves World. Unfortunately, none of them ever saw the light of day on the 64-bit console. Founded in the early '90s, Bits Studios released a series of Game Boy and Super Nintendo games, developing a good relationship with Nintendo along the way that lead to a couple of collaboration projects (R-Type DX and Warlocked, published by Nintendo on the Game Boy Color). This relationship with Nintendo expanded blossomed a trilogy of exclusive games conceived for the Nintendo 64. Of this trilogy, only RiQa was a prominent title at E3 1999 (you can read more about this lost game in a dedicated article later in the book), as Die Hard 64 and Thieves World were never officially announced. One of the first mentions of a Die Hard tie-in for Nintendo 64 was published in June 1999 by IGN when they wrote about its publisher: "[...] Fox Interactive is working on Die Hard 64. In unleashing your cash-making movie machine into the world of videogames, you can't make the mistake of skipping a console like the N64 and it seems that the folks behind the movie have realized this fact. While the rumor is still brewing, several sources, both stateside and overseas are reporting that a Die Hard project is in the works at Fox Interactive and that the game is scheduled for an early 2000 release." Nothing more was said about the project until March 2000 when IGN contacted the publisher again to ask about the game: "Interested to know what had become of Die Hard 64, we contacted Fox Interactive today and a company representative briefly theorized about the title with us. "The game is just a rumor," said the Fox spokesperson, "and to be honest with you, I don't see it coming to fruition." While this is not a solid confirmation of the game's termination one way or the other, it definitely doesn't paint a pretty picture. The fact of the matter is that Fox Interactive's first foray into Nintendo 64 development, namely Fox Sports College Hoops '99, backed by an impressive amount of money, turned to disaster when the game failed to sell. And with the industry's insistence that the 64-bit console is a "dying system," it isn't a stretch to conclude that the publisher simply canned the game after determining that the risks involved were not worth any possible profits to be made." IGN's assumption about the fate of the game were quite spot-on and in May 2001 Fox Interactive officially announced "Die Hard: Next Generation", planned for Nintendo's Gamecube and developed by Bits Studios. The title was then released as "Die Hard: Vendetta" in 2002 for GameCube, PS2 and Xbox. The mystery remains: was Die Hard 64 really in development for Nintendo 64? Was any FPS ever made by Bits Studios on the cartridge-based hardware? While even some former Bits Studios developers did not know about the project (as seen in our interview with Frederic Villain in this same book), we were able to get in contact with a few people that worked directly on the game, to find out the truth. We should start this investigation with another IGN article posted in May 2002, where they were able to interview Bits Studios' CEO Foo Katan and Die Hard: Vendetta producer Mario Aguera, revealing some more details: "In the past couple of years we have kept a relatively low profile as we have been developing new and existing technologies to make use of the hardware available at our disposal today. Die Hard: Vendetta will justify our hard work in that time. [...] we've always had a close relationship with Nintendo here at Bits and they first approached us about Project Dolphin in the autumn of 1999. At that point it was purely the hardware

specs and they had some demonstrations running through software emulation. We originally started designing the game when the N64 was out, but in Spring 2000 we decided to start our design again for the Gamecube. For the first year we were just working with the emulator, hoping that Nintendo would deliver on their promises. Needless to say they did." The early Nintendo 64 design for the game started out as an original IP titled "Muzzle Velocity", a first person shooter in which players would take the role of Jack, a member of a SWAT team during a mission in Los Angeles. In Muzzle Velocity's original storyline, the crime wave in LA is out of control and the LAPD cannot stop it on its own. enough to stop it. Jack was been sent by Bert, his SWAT leader, to supply the LAPD with backup and neutralize the situation. During the first mission of the game, a bomb detonated in a Hi-Fi store downtown. The owner was refusing to up his "fire Insurance" to the gangsters, who in return wrecked his shop. The gangsters have then gone on a looting spree in the surrounding shops. The main mission's objectives would have been to clear the area of gangster and minimise innocent casualties. Muzzle Velocity's gameplay and controls would have been similar to other classic N64 FPS such as 007 Goldeneye and Perfect Dark. Players' mission objectives in this first level were given by Bert and once in control, they would have been free to move Jack around LA downtown. There would be a few LAPD cops and civilians running around the levels, either running from the fight, defeating bad guys, or simply dodging bullets. The buildings in the area would have been mostly shut up, but some would have their shutters half way down, allowing Jack to enter them by crouching into the window; the environment was meant to be interactive and it could have been damaged by players during shootouts. While Jack would start the first mission with a 9mm pistol and a SWAT armour, any weapon used by the gangsters could be picked up, such as shotguns and baseball bats. Muzzle Velocity did not last long once Bits Studio partnered with Fox Interactive to collaborate on a new project. It's possible that the deal was overseen by Gary Sheinwald, former Bits Studios Development Manager who left to work at Fox as Senior Producer from 1995 to 2001. Because of the partnership with Fox, Muzzle Velocity had to be tied with a movie and initially Speed 2 was proposed. Dubbed Speed 2: Cruise Control, the game would have been primarily set on a boat, though a bus level was also conceived as a nod to the original film. The game was then planned to release in January 1999 for Nintendo 64 and PC. Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on how you view it) the movie was a huge failure when it released and both companies decided to switch the project once more to another, more successful IP: Die Hard. As an interesting note, the original script for Speed 2 was meant to be Die Hard 3 ("Die Hard with a Vengeance", codenamed "Troubleshooter") in a strange case of film development pre shadowing the game development process. Still being developed as a Nintendo 64 game and using the new TWED engine created by Nathanael Presson and Frederic Villain, a lot of effort was put into creating Die Hard 64. The initial plan was overly ambitious, with 30 or 40 missions planned, but once Steven Goodwin took over as the new lead programmer and explained to the producers how many years they would need to achieve such a huge game, the number was heavily cut down. Only a handful of levels were developed on the Nintendo 64 before the switch to the Gamecube, but they still had a good prototype with the minimal gameplay available. Being a N64 game, a 4 players deathmatch mode was also devised, to keep in line with Rare's multiplayer masterpieces. While years passed, in early 2000 Bits Studios found itself in some issues when RiQa was cancelled and the N64's life cycle reached its end. Neither Die Hard 64 nor Thieves World were finished yet and it was unlikely that anyone would buy a N64 game once they were, as the new generation of consoles were almost out. The studio decided to move their last N64 games to GameCube and significantly upgrade the TWED engine so they could push the tech into the next gen hardware. Danny Carr took over design duties for the GameCube

version and had a new visions for a cinematic game that felt and played like a film, probably preceding the new generation of linear shooters that became popular many years later. Development of the game still took a while to be completed: Carr left the studio in late 2001 and Mario Aguera took the lead. Aguera wanted to add many interesting element he saw in other (at the time) successful games and movies into the design, a good idea that would lengthen development time even more.. For example the sneak/action modes were inspired by Thief, while the "bullet time" was taken from The Matrix. In the end Die Hard took so much time to be released that it looked like Bits Studios copied the "bullet time" mechanic from Max Payne, albeit it was implemented in early prototypes before the release of Remedy's game. When finally published in 2002, Die Hard: Vendetta was much different from what the team originally conceived in late '90s and it only received average reviews. As it always happens in these cases, we can only dream of an alternate reality where Die Hard 64 was successfully completed and became another masterpiece for our beloved Nintendo 64.

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DINOSAUR PLANET

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Dinosaur Planet was planned to be Rare's swan song on the Nintendo 64; a graphically magnificent, ambitious, Zelda-like adventure game. When it did come out in 2002 it was under the title of Star Fox Adventures for the Gamecube, Nintendo's next-gen console at the time. It's said this was due to legendary game developer Shigeru Miyamoto viewing the anthropomorphic animals in an early build of the title reminding him of Fox McCloud and his pals. After his input, Rare decided the game would benefit from being set in the Star Fox universe. According to many, Rare dropped some of the game's most interesting features in the porting process making it impossible to know if the Nintendo 64 version was actually better. This is especially intriguing considering it was between 80 and 90% complete when the switch was made. Dinosaur Planet entered development sometime around 1999 and 2000, and it was around this time that many tweaks were made so it could become part of the Star Fox universe. The main character, Sabre, became Fox McCloud when they decided to port it to the newer console, which means Sabre never saw the light of day as a Gamecube model. Krystal was originally designed as a fully playable character, but was heavily cut in this process. The protagonists would have been accompanied by their respective sidekicks, Tricky the triceratops (for Sabre) and Kyte the pterodactyl (for Krystal); only the former survived the transition to the Gamecube. According to documents on rareminion.com, Sabre was supposed to be romantically interested in Krystal, and was characterised as a care-free arrogant protagonist. He was "very headstrong and [didn't] relish the prospect of looking after a spoilt prince throughout his journey". His involvement in the game's plot began with him looking for his missing father, Randorn. On the other hand, Krystal was supposed to be a strong female character; "her turbulent upbringing has given her a cool and mature head for her age, which has often

proven invaluable in some difficult situations". She would've also had an interest in Sabre, meaning the romantic aspect of the plot was to be much more significant in the game. The gameplay allowed for the two characters to be used in different locations and chapters of the game. To switch between the two, the player would use an item known as the Swapstone (which later became the WarpStone). It also appeared that both of the main characters had their own weapons: Krystal used a compact staff, while Sabre used a sword. Krystal and her staff made it through to Adventures, but sadly, her weapon is lost at the beginning of the game, so we never get to see her use it. Instead, Fox McCloud finds the staff and uses it instead of Sabre's sword. Even more interesting are the pre-production artworks that show a more adult version of the main characters. We don't know if this was because Saber was required to grow up during the adventure, or because there was a time traveling device like in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Additionally, earlier versions of characters and enemies from the Gamecube game were seen in previews, including General Scales, the SharpClaws, the Galdon, GrubTubs, the wounded EarthWalker, and Scales' flying SharpClaw Galleon. Other differences between the original Nintendo 64 game and Star Fox Adventure include , Krystal's reason for boarding the Galleon. In Dinosaur Planet, it was to save Queen CloudRunner's daughter, who was caged near the head of the ship. In Adventures, the young CloudRunner is still there, but merely serves as a tutorial for the talk button, and Krystal's reasons for boarding the ship are unknown. Additionally, throughout Star Fox Adventures, the planet the game takes place on is referred to as "Dinosaur Planet," but in Star Fox Assault, it's referred to as "Sauria." One of the more controversial changes in Dinosaur Planet is General Scales, who was supposed to be the main villain of the game, never ending up as the final boss. He was initially planned as one, however, due to Rare being rushed by the upcoming GameCube console and Microsoft's buyout of the company, they had to scrap the final fight against him. More controversial was the highly sexual transformation of Krystal from a blue cat to a blue vixen in Adventures which was done in order to make her a potential love interest for Fox McCloud. The final game is a mixture of English voice acting (Fox and the rest of the Star Fox team) and dinosaur language (General Scales, for example). Dinosaur Planet was originally going to be fully voice acted in English as can

be seen in the fight against the Galleon where Krystal spoke of "...a mountain hidden within a storm...," as well as her CloudRunner directing her attack on the Galleon. Dinosaur language was added later into the game's development, though it's unclear if it was an idea by Nintendo or a last minute addition by Rare. Nevertheless, it has been discovered that there's quite a bit of leftover information from the initial version of the game in Star Fox Adventures. Members of the Star Fox Online forums found that a decent portion of the original Dinosaur Planet script is still contained within the game. A file on the Star Fox Adventures disc called GAMETEXT.bin contains text used in the entire game, both for the Nintendo 64 version of Dinosaur Planet and the GameCube version of Star Fox Adventures. Though not complete, many scenes from Dinosaur Planet's storyline still remain intact in the file. One can find trailers, concept art, music, and even an hour long gameplay of Dinosaur Planet (the first 18 minutes and miscellaneous scenes) in magazines and on websites. However, no playable ROM has been found thus far, so the chance of a playable version being discovered is highly unlikely. Additionally, a prototype of Star Fox Adventures was revealed to have over an hour of Dinosaur Planet voice acting, including nearly everything except the game's ending. The voice acting dates back to when the game was being converted into a Star Fox title, so in some instances Sabre was replaced by Fox and there were references to the Star Fox series. Dinosaur Planet, in its initial form, looked like a promising game; a late addition that might have served as successful send-off to a dying console. Star Fox Adventures, however, remains a very questionable game, often dividing gamers between those who think it's a solid adventure title and those who believe the initial Fox-less version would have been a much better game. Given the lack of a finished version of Dinosaur Planet, this topic remains up for debate.

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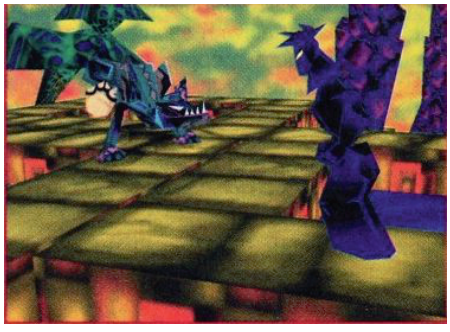
FREAK BOY

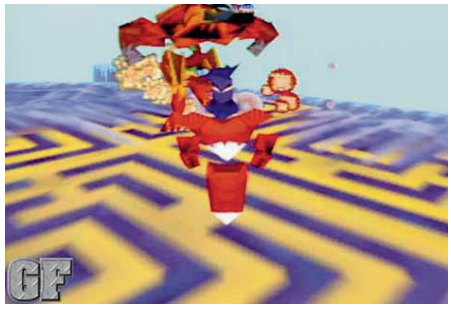
Article by: Connor Sheehy, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Originally conceived in 1993 for the original Playstation under the title of "Stacker", Freak Boy had a long and troubled development that made it one of the most interesting and mysterious lost games announced for the Nintendo 64. With an abstract graphic style and original gameplay mechanics, Freak Boy could have become a cult classic for N64 owners with other fan favorite puzzle adventures like Silicon Valley, Rocket: Robot on Wheels or Glover. What exactly was Freak Boy? As we can read in the original press release published in May 1996: "On New Year's Day, when the planets are aligned with the sun, the ZoS, an alien race from a parallel dimension, take over the Hedron Universe, extinguishing the sun and transporting all of the Hedrons to the alien dimension. The only Hedron to evade capture is FREAK BOY, who is destined to become the hero of his people, provided he can rid his universe of the alien threat and return the captive



Hedrons to their rightful dimension. As FREAK BOY, players can absorb remnants of the destruction into their body and utilize them as weapons to destroy the alien invaders. What's more, the variations on these weapons are almost endless. Capable of holding three new artifacts at a time, each with a different capability when used as head, chest or feet, FREAK BOY is never the same character twice. FREAK BOY'S body is constantly morphing as new artifacts are assimilated and old ones are discarded. In managing the inventory of weapons as they enter and exit FREAK BOY's body, the player gains new abilities in his fight to destroy the more than 50 enemies who have set out to conquer the Hedron universe. On their quest for more powerful weapons and the alien enemy, players will explore more than 25 distinct worlds throughout five levels of difficulty. Each world is radically visual, arid and stark, yet with texture, mystery and entertainment that lure the player further into the world of FREAK BOY." The absorbing powers feature sounds similar to Kirby but in a less cute way: the main play mechanic consisted of stacking pieces a certain way in your character's body. The position of pieces in the "stack" determined a piece's function or special ability. For example, by placing the "Drill Piece" in the leg / foot, you could drill downward through the floor and open up new areas, when the same piece was placed in the belly area, you could drill forward and break through walls, and if placed in the head, you could drill upwards through ceilings, overhangs and / or enemies. Another of these parts was the "Sticky Piece", that, when placed in the foot position, the character would have been able to walk better on slanted or narrow planks without falling off. If used in the belly, you could stick to a wall and inch your way up, and, when in the head, you could stick to the ceiling and "walk" / glide with your head over barriers, etc. This system would have provided a wide variety of situations and methods to resolve the same problem in different ways. Picture a Kirby and Zelda cross-over but a bit darker, going through lovely abstract 3D levels (all connected by a HUB world) as you solve puzzles and beat up alien invaders to save the earth. There was some kind of a puzzle element while managing the different pieces, as they moved up Freak Boy's body while collected. So to get a piece, say the Drill, you'd jump on it: the piece enters your body and becomes your Drill foot. If you then jump on a Sticky piece, the Drill moves up to your belly, and the Sticky becomes your foot. And if you then jump on a Gun piece, the Drill moves to the head, then Sticky to the belly, and the Gun goes into the foot and so on. This mechanic was conceived by the lead designer and creator of Freak Boy, William Novak, who wanted to make a new polygonal 3D game as different as possible from Doom (the most popular title at the time), exploring two main features that entertain gamers of all ages: jumping on things (Super Mario Bros) and arranging objects in a certain order to accomplish a task (Tetris). Novak was one of the founders of Zono Incorporated with his friend Ed Zobrist, a two-man team that previously worked together at Mattel Toys. They released (along with BlueSky Software) their first game "TechnoClash" in 1993, published by Electronic Arts on the Sega Genesis / Mega Drive. Freak Boy would have been their second project, initially pitched to Sony for their yet-to-be-released Playstation. At the time, Sony was actively soliciting game developers to sign up to create titles for their planned console: Zobrist and Novak met with them a few times and the publisher was enthusiastic to support Stacker / Freak Boy's innovative concept. Sony would have provide development software and hardware for free, with "endless" support and in-person help. While Novak was wrapping up a detailed presentation to convince Sony to fund and publish Stacker as a Sony-branded game, he got a phone call from Rebecca Allen, a former Mattel consultant. At the time, she was an Executive Producer at Virgin Interactive Entertainment and told Novak that their President, Martin Alper, was desperate to have a great game idea to take to Nintendo. Alper wanted to get VIE on the recently announced "Nintendo's Dream Team" but didn't have any original in-house concepts to show them. Rebecca asked Novak if he had been working on anything they might be interested in. At first Novak told her they were already talking with Sony for their Stacker concept, but after discussing with Zobrist, the team decided to give Virgin a shot. When they explained the idea behind Stacker to Martin Alper, he loved it and immediately worked out a deal to bring Novak on-board at VIE as a contracted designer to lead their in-house development team known as Burst

Studios. Now Virgin only needed to convince Nintendo of the game's potential, to join their fabled "Dream Team". The publisher arranged a meeting with a few top Japanese Nintendo executives at the January 1994 Winter CES in Las Vegas: the team only had 3 weeks to create some kind of demo to show them. Virgin managed to send Novak to newly-formed Digital Domain, James Cameron's visual effects company, to use their technology. During 1993 Christmas holidays, they worked hard to make a short video of a generic-looking 3D character showing how pieces were captured, used in various body positions, and popped out. The target render footage was just 30 seconds long, because this kind of computer graphics was very expensive at the time, but that was enough to have a rough idea on how Stacker could have been. Everyone was nervous during the meeting with Japanese Nintendo executives, it was not a joke to have such a chance to join their Dream Team and to receive their feedback on Stacker, but everything went great: sometime later after all the contracts and agreements were made, Virgin joined Nintendo to create one of the first third party N64 games. VIE started to work on Freak Boy in early 1994, giving resources to Burst Studios to create one of the first American Nintendo 64 games ever conceived. Zono hired another programmer, Paul Byford from Rare, who already worked with Novak for Mattel on Super Glove Ball for the NES. Patrick Moran was one of Burst Studios' artists that were working on "Spot Goes to Hollywood" but was soon moved to Stacker to became its Lead Artist and Animator, creating the peculiar look of the main protagonist and the alien worlds. The rest of the team was composed exclusively of Burst Studios developers and managers. Mr. Julian Rignall, a publishing veteran who worked with Virgin Interactive as a Vice-President of design and later went on to write for IGN was quoted saying this in 1999: "I played an early demo of it [Freak Boy] and I thought it was brilliant. The design is still viable today and I still think it would make a game that would definitely be one of the five best for Nintendo 64". As the team got bigger (it got up to 35-40 people), Novak started losing control of the direction of the game, and unfortunately there were a series of disagreements with Virgin's producers. While the game changed name from Stacker to Freak Boy because of trademark reasons, the project was still in early development. Wanting to get a "Completion Bonus" (higher pay if the game would have been finished in 8 months) one of the producers tried to change Freak Boy into some sort of on-rails driving game, which was much easier to produce than a puzzle-based, "free roaming", third-person action adventure. A pre-rendered animation for this "On-Rails Freak Boy" was done without Novak's knowledge and shown as the official trailer for the game at E3 of that year. After E3, Novak was furious and eventually dragged Martin Alper into the battle against the producer. The team had to wait a while before Freak Boy went back to its original design, losing time and resources. Even if that producer was later removed from the game, Freak Boy had at least five other different producers over two and a half years of development... and that did not help at all. It seems that Virgin's videogames division had many games in development, most of them with heavy managing issues. Trying to fix these problems, producers were switched from one game to another, in the hope they could turn it around. If they didn't fix-it in 5-6 months, they would be removed and reassigned to another, and another producer would be sent in. Typically, when a new producer came onto Freak Boy, they threw out the previous producer's development plan, and threw out the work that was done under them. The reason was, that if the previous producer screwed up, the new producer didn't want to have anything to do with fixing someone else's mess. So to play safe, they threw out everything. It's easy to understand how this working environment would have killed even the best game ever conceived. This is the main reason Freak Boy was never completed: throwing out good work for no reason other than a new producer has come in. It became clear to Novak that Freak Boy would have never been completed at VIE: after two and a half years he decided



to quit the project. There was a good clause in the Zono contract and they were able to pull out legally. The whole team at Burst Studios was then moved off to work on a Las Vegas casino game for N64 (another unreleased project) but VIE didn't officially announce that Freak Boy was cancelled. The reason for this mystery seems to be a clause in the original contract between Zono and VIE, which said that if Freak Boy was not completed in a certain time frame or was cancelled, the rights to the game would revert back to Zono. Managers at VIE were probably furious when they realized that after all the money spent on Freak Boy, they wouldn't even own the game if they cancelled it. They decided to put it on "indefinite hold" and VIE told the press the project was still in production, because they didn't want the rights to go back to Zono. This did not change the fact that Freak Boy was unofficially cancelled and the project remained an unsolved mystery for many years. Only thanks to Novak's answers to our questions about the project (check the full interview in this book) were we able to finally know what really happened to Freak Boy. The game somehow reappeared in September 2015, when a reader of Unseen64 randomly found a playable early prototype at a carboot sale in Guildford, UK. It seems that the seller at this flea market did not know much about the historical importance of the strange development cart that he was selling, along with other old games. Luckily, our friend recognized the title written with a marker on the dev-cart and quickly bought it before other retrogamers could. It seems that along with Freak Boy, the same seller had 2 other prototype carts. One had "casino" written (probably VIE's other lost N64 game) and the second one "mario 2". At the moment, the found Freak Boy prototype is still in the hands of a collector, but we hope that in the future the ROM could leak online, to be preserved by the community. What happened to the main designers behind Freak Boy? Novak already had other games in the works, and, after quitting the contract with VIE, he hooked back up with Ed Annunziata (the mind behind such classics as Chakan: The Forever Man, Ecco the Dolphin and Vectorman) to complete "Mr. Bones", released on the Sega Saturn in 1996. Today, Novak teaches video game design as the head of the Game Art & Design department at Woodbury University in Burbank, California. Lead Artist and Animator Patrick Moran, the "father" of Freak Boy's character design, has returned to selling his paintings in his art gallery in Laguna Beach, California. Burst Studios released only 3 games in their lifetime: Toonstruck (1996) for PC, Spot Goes to Hollywood (1996) and Grand Slam (1997) for Playstation and Sega Saturn. After being disbanded in 2003, Virgin Interactive Entertainment's remaining assets were acquired by Titus Software and the studio was renamed to Avalon Interactive, but they filed bankruptcy in 2005. Zono Incorporated released about 10 games for consoles before being sold to MumboJumbo in 2006 and renamed "MumboJumbo LA", mainly making games for mobile phones. Only a year later, the company closed down the LA branch and terminated all employees.

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JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Jack and the Beanstalk is a mysterious project that was sometimes listed by english gaming press as a new "coming soon" game for Nintendo 64 and 64DD add-on. Was it really a game in development by Nintendo? Sort of. It seems that the name was originally used in February 1995 when Nintendo and HAL Laboratory published an ad in a few japanese magazines, to hire new people for their "Jack and the Beanstalk Project" (or Jack & Beans), a collaborative development team with the objective to create original and revolutionary games for Nintendo's 64 bit console. The name of this "team project" in that advertising page was probably misinterpreted by english magazines and websites as the title of a new Nintendo title, but it was much more than a single game: it was a multitude of different gaming concepts, prototypes and interactive experiments. The name of this project was probably inspired by the traditional fairy tale of Jack and the Beanstalk, in which: "As Jack slept, the beans germinated in the soil, and by morning a gigantic beanstalk grew in their place. When

Jack saw the huge beanstalk, he immediately decided to climb it. He arrived in a land high up in the clouds that happened to be the home of a giant". In 1996 the Jack and the Beanstalk team was moved on the second floor of the Nintendo Kanda building, under the supervision of HAL Laboratories. This was a small team of about ten employees, lead by Yoichi Yamamoto. Yamamoto was one of several non-video game-industry personnel selected to work on the project by a panel of four important Nintendo figures: Shigesato Itoi (creator of the Mother / EarthBound series), Satoru Iwata (president of HAL from 1993), Kouichi Nakamura (one of the developers for the first Dragon Quest at Enix and later founder of Chunsoft) and Shigeru Miyamoto (you know who he is, right?). Nintendo was specifically trying to find out professionals from many different fields to work at Jack and the Beanstalk, to be able to design interesting gameplays ideas that would have used the new power and features of their Nintendo 64 and 64DD (as the internal clock and rewritable data disks). Three years later, in 1999 HAL Laboratory released Pocket Monsters Stadium, Super SMASH Bros and Pokèmon Snap for Nintendo 64, while they were also working on the 64DD version of Sim City (released in 2000) and maybe helping Maxis with the development of the unreleased SimCopter 64 (that would have been able to use cities from Sim City 64DD). What happened to Jack and the Beanstalk? From the few info available, it seems that even if Nintendo never released a game with that title, many of the original ideas that the team designed found their way into different games, such as Pokémon Snap and the cancelled EarthBound 64. As we can read on Kotaku: "Originally, Pokémon Snap for the Nintendo 64 system wasn't a Pokémon game," recalls Nintendo president Satoru Iwata, "but rather a normal game in which you took photos, but the motivation for playing the game wasn't clear." [...] Game designer Masanobu Yamamoto was working on Pokémon Snap, and he initially had a negative reaction to the addition of Pokémon, because the characters replaced what he was working on. "That time, adopting the Pokémon world clarified what we should do and the direction we should head," Yamamoto adds, "and I came to like Pokémon, so I felt like that had saved us." In the intro of Pokemon Snap, along with "HAL Laboratory" and "Nintendo" logos, we can also see the text "Jack and Beans". From Pokemon Snap's credit list on Mobygames, we can read the names of some of the people that were hired in 1996 for the Jack and the Beanstalk project:

- Director: Yoichi Yamamoto, Koji Inokuchi, Akira Takeshima
- Designer: Shigezo Kawase, Takeyuki Machida, Masanobu Yamamoto, Shizu Higashiyama
- Sound Designer: Ikuko Mimori
- Programmer: Yoshiaki Shinohara, Kazuki Sekimori, Jinji Horagai, Tomoyuki Sumi, Hirotaka Kato, Hideaki Kiko

What happened to the Jack and the Beanstalk team? After working on Pokèmon Snap most of the staff was scattered around to work on different projects at Nintendo and in other software houses. Yoichi Yamamoto was credited as producer and designer for such games as La Pucelle Tactics (Nippon Ichi Software), Kirby Air Ride, Dino Crisis 3 (Capcom), Kirby: Mass Attack, Kirby's Epic Yarn and as far as we know he's still working on games for Nintendo. Koichi Nakamura is still working at Chunsoft for such games as the Fushigi no Dungeon series (that includes titles as Chocobo's Dungeon and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon) and in 2008 he created "428: Fusa Sareta Shibuya de", an interesting visual novel with multiple protagonists and parallel gameplay / storylines that got a 40/40 perfect score from Famitsu Magazine. Koji Inokuchi seems to have worked as designer at Namco for Mr. Driller: Drill Land, published in 2002 for GameCube, but we cannot find anything more about what he's doing now. We don't even know what happened to Akira Takeshima, he seems vanished into nothingness after Pokemon Snap. Shigesato Itoi is still working as a writer in the Japanese industry but is unclear if he'll ever work on more videogames after Mother 3. Satoru Iwata became the fourth president of Nintendo before to die in July 2015. Shigeru Miyamoto is still working as General Manager of Nintendo. The Jack and the Beanstalk team will remain in history as one of the most obscure and interesting group of developers and designer that were put together to work in complete freedom on original gameplay ideas for Nintendo new IPs.

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MINI RACERS

Article by: Allan J Paxton

Mini Racers was an arcade racer in development at Looking Glass Studios for the Nintendo 64 and began its development in the later stages of the console's life. The game took its cue from the Micro Machines / RC PRO-AM style of arcade racer and used an isometric view with 3D car models and courses. Being an arcade style racer, Mini Racers would have been a perfect fit on Nintendo's 64 bit console, which was well known for its racing titles. Of note were Mario Kart 64, F- Zero X and Diddy Kong Racing, developed by Nintendo and their first party studio Rare respectively, which all at their core were built around fun single player and multiplayer racers. Looking Glass Studios was founded in the early 1990s and was a result of the merger between Lerner Research and Blue Sky Software, which itself was founded by Paul Neurath. They became popular by developing numerous titles for the PC, including critical hit as System Shock, Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri, System Shock 2 and the Thief series. Only in 1999, Looking Glass released their first titles on a home console: a port of the PC title Command and Conquer, and a port of the popular Playstation title Destruction Derby, both of which were for the Nintendo 64. Both ports were relatively well received by reviewers, but neither were massive successes. In May of 2000, Looking Glass Studios closed for good following financial issues, caused in part by poor sales of its own self-published titles like Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri and British Open Championship Golf. As a result of the closure, Mini Racers was cancelled (along with another N64 project titled "Warball", a dodgeball game) and a number of staff went on to join Irrational Games, itself a company founded by former Looking Glass employee Ken Levine. Even if Mini Racers was never officially published, not all hopes were lost. In 2012, a Nintendo 64 cartridge was listed for sale on eBay. This was said to be an early prototype of an arcade racer titled Tamiya Racing. The game was being developed by Intermetrics, an associate of Looking Glass Studios, who merged with the company in 1997. The cartridge was purchased for £1,358 and, when accessed, showed that Tamiya Racing shared a number of similarities to Mini Racers, using the same isometric 3D camera with polygonal car models and 3D tracks. However, it was a licensed title using the Japanese RC brand, Tamiya, as its base. The prototype was limited to a single track and was said to have poor controls and camera angles, but it was fun to play. The game never

moved beyond single level prototype stage, and it is believed that its failure to do so was due to licensing issues between the developers and Tamiya, as well as licensing issues with the manufacturers of the real world cars that were also set to appear in the game. The merger of Looking Glass and Intermetrics and the demise of Tamiya Racing appears to have led to the game re-emerging as Mini Racers, being developed internally at Looking Glass Studios. The title, announced in 1998, was featured at a number of trade shows, including Space World 1999. However, the game saw a number of delays and the team was not able to release it before closing down. In 2012, another Nintendo 64 cartridge was placed for sale on eBay, this time with claims that it was the final build of Mini Racers. The cartridge eventually sold for £3,000 (probably due to the game being near completion). The build of the leaked game had three modes of play and 39 tracks to race on. The final game was also going to have a random track generator and a functioning track editor, allowing user created tracks. Cars featured in the game also had two variants, standard and off-road. Despite not being officially released to the public, the near complete build of Mini Racers is now available to those that wish to make the effort to obtain the ROM. It is also clear that, from the opinions of who have played the title, that the game offered a fun single player experience and an equally fun multiplayer experience. Sadly we will never know if this title could have been the success that may have helped keep Looking Glass Studios open, but it's clear that they were taking their time to create a fun experience for the player right up until its cancellation.

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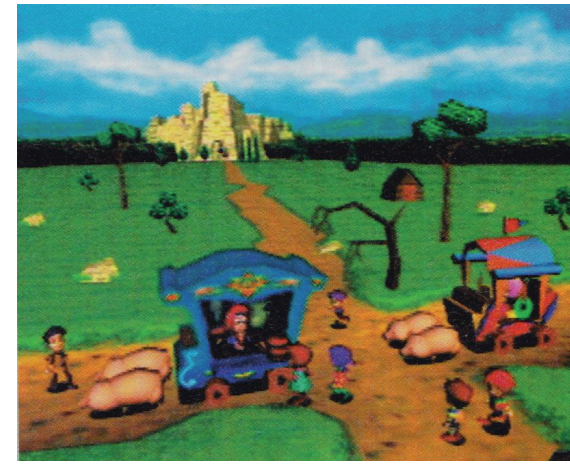
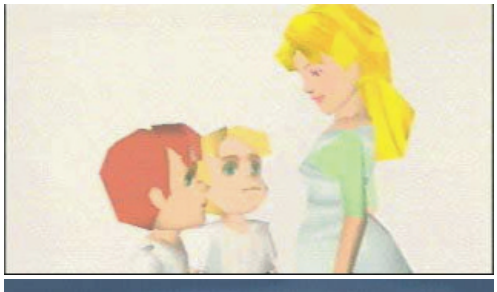
MOTHER 3 (EARTHBOUND 64)

Article by: Matt Soulia



When it comes to games with the tag "cult classic" attached to it, few fit the description quite as well as the RPG series, Mother. Originally released only in Japan, the first Mother game had elements of other games in the genre, such as turn based battles, but with a more human feel, letting players connect with the world they were occupying in a greater way than in any other RPG of the time. Unlike its predecessor, Mother 2 did see a release outside of Japan, renamed Earthbound. Mother 2 improved on many of the elements seen in the first game, and became a bit of a sleeper hit for the series. The game didn't seem to get much attention, however, until the main character of the game, Ness, was featured as a playable character in the first Super Smash Bros for the Nintendo 64. Shortly after Mother 2's development ended in 1994, Mother 3 began its long journey. Spanning a development time of nearly 12 years, the production of Mother 3 is a long tale, filled with potholes and drama. While the concept of the game started on the Super Famicom/ SNES, the game was soon moved on to the N64 and was to be developed for the Disk Drive (64DD) as one of the launch titles, along with games like the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Had the game been released on the 64DD, there was discussion of possibly having a bonus disc with the game that would include additional content. While the idea's were in place for the 64DD version of the game, the 64DD was postponed many times and when finally released it was a commercial failure. As a result, development of



Mother 3 continued as a normal N64 game (just like Ocarina of Time), which would have utilized the optional expansion pack for the system. The plot of the game was to follow the main character, Flint, a man dressed in pseudo-old west garb, and his two sons Claus and Lucas (the latter of which appears as a playable in Super Smash Bros Brawl for the Wii). Spanning 12 chapters over a course of ten years, the player would have also encountered a total of 10 playable characters throughout the game. Battle mechanics in the game, while generally following a typical turn-based RPG system, would also have been unique. While a character could attack as normal, if the player were to time their attacks in time with the in game music, the attack would have a much greater effect. Also, should a character be knocked down during one of the games Quick Time Events, there would be an option for the character to "Get Up" in battle. Another mechanic that would have been interesting was for the game to have a real-time mechanic, very similar to games like Animal Crossing. A playable demo of the game (under its North American name Earthbound 64) was made available at the Space World event in 1999, of which the gaming website IGN had a hands on experience. Even though the demo of the game didn't feature much, IGN was very favorable of the demo, stating that a cutscene in the game featuring Claus and Lucas in a mine cart was "one of the most impressive cutscenes on the N64". They also had high praise for the game's controls and music, but stated that the battle system was "confusing". All in all though, they said that the game seemed nearly complete. After the Space World 1999 event, however, not much more of the game was revealed. Nintendo was unable to give any information on the game, stating only that they wanted to release the game in Japan prior to the US version. Nintendo also failed to show anything new from the game at the Electronics Entertainment Expo (E3) event in 2000. Despite this, many felt that there would be a "nearly finished" version of the game revealed soon at Nintendo's Space World 2000 event. Prior to the event, however, game producer Satoru Iwata canceled the game altogether, with lead producer Shigesato Itoi officially announcing the cancellation in August of 2000. According to sources within Nintendo, when cancellation of the game happened, the game was very far into production, with the N64 version of the game being roughly 80% complete at the time. While Iwata stated that the game had not been completely abandoned, both Iwata and Itoi felt that there wasn't a need for the game to be 3D. Iwata stated that Itoi's greatest talent "is in words", and that they were both "too caught up in the 3D obsession and felt obligated". There was some interesting fallout post-cancellation of the game. Several members of the development team went on to work on Project Dolphin (the codename for the Gamecube) and many of the respective games involved with that console. It was also reported that Itoi and HAL Laboratories both experienced several personal and financial setbacks. Additionally, several online petitions stemming from fansites cropped up in an attempt to get the game's development up and running again, all of which were met in vain. A lot of interesting rumors cropped up concerning the Mother 3 / Earthbound 64 prototype. A YouTube user by the name of skater24481, a collector of rare and obscure video games, claimed to have obtained a beta cartridge of Earthbound 64, even posting a video of said beta on his youtube channel. When asked if he still had the game, however, he claimed to have sold it stating the beta to be "boring". Since then,

the video and the youtube channel have been taken down, and any trace of this supposed beta has gone cold. Contradictory to this, however, is an interview conducted with game debugger Brenden Sechter for the website earthboundcentral.com. In the interview, Sechter claimed to have actually played an "alpha" prototype of the game while at Nintendo HQ. When asked about the games prototype, he stated that as far as he knows there is only the one prototype, and the chances of it seeing a public release are "slim to none", seemingly putting the nail in the coffin of skater24481's claims. In 2003, the story of Mother 3 started to come full circle. At the end of a commercial for the Game Boy Advance release of Mother 1+2, a statement was seen, saying "We are developing Mother 3 also". Having to start from the ground up with the graphics, little else was changed for the development of the GBA release of Mother 3, with the game maintaining all of the story elements, characters, and much of the gameplay elements from the N64 version of the game. According to Itoi, he had assumed that restarting the project would have been impossible, but decided to continue the game thanks to the encouragement and support of the vocal Mother fanbase. The story and long development of Mother 3 finally came to an end on April 20, 2006 with the release of the Game Boy Advance version of the game in Japan, which received relatively positive reviews. While the game was never released internationally, fans of the game did eventually make translations of the game so the whole world could enjoy it to its fullest. Mother 3 / Earthbound 64 is certainly one of the greatest tales in gaming history, and the development of the game is not only a tale of a game's creation, but of the passion and voice of a fanbase that shows the power that fans can have on any form of media, not just Mother 3.

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REV LIMIT

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Rev Limit is a cancelled racing game similar to Ridge Racer, which was developed in tandem between Seta Corporation and Nintendo for the Nintendo 64 DD. It was to be released between 1996 and 1997, and was one of the early titles announced for the console and its add-on. The game was postponed many times and it was even “downgraded” from the 64DD to a “normal” N64 game before finally being dropped. It seems that a playable version of Rev Limit should exist for the Seta arcade board named “Aleck 64”, based on the Nintendo 64 hardware, but no physical proof of this has ever been found. According to an article in the September 1997 issue of N64 Magazine, Rev Limit was “three-quarters complete” and was aimed at the console market, unlike Ridge Racer, which started exclusively as an arcade game and was later ported to consoles. It was also to be a more realistic, immersive experience that would include the possibility of damaging one’s car (affecting its performance and speed), as well as pit stops. Not unlike games such as Daytona USA, it would’ve also included different characteristics and parameters for each vehicle, making each one of them feel and handle differently. The developers did this in order to give players as many different combinations and options as possible. Despite all the options that were to be included, designer Yashuhiko Kikuchi expressed to N64 magazine that they decided to not make

the game compatible with the N64's Rumble Pack, explaining that they couldn't find a way for it to add to the overall experience, instead feeling like it would be a distraction or gimmick. When it came to the graphics, according to a report by IGN from Nintendo Space World 1996, the game had beautiful backgrounds and interesting non-repeating environments. Unlike the aforementioned Ridge Racer franchise, Rev Limit would've favoured more organic and natural backgrounds such as forests or deserts instead of urban settings. Moreover, the NASCAR-esque vehicles looked really well defined and the tracks looked interesting and seemed to feature real-time lighting effects, offering the ability to race at different times of night or day. These kinds of features are commonplace these days but, at the time, would've been considered revolutionary. Unfortunately, gameplay-wise, despite being more realistic than other, more "arcadey" games, Rev Limit apparently had an issue with speed; it just wasn't fast enough. Of course, we will never find out if this had more to do with it being unfinished. What we do know is that the Nintendo 64 was capable of some really astonishing speeds. One just has to play games like F-Zero 64 or even Ridge Racer 64 to realise this. Having had a general overview of the game's development, it shouldn't have come as a surprise that it was eventually canceled. Although the game was slated to make an appearance at some E3 Expos before the aforementioned Nintendo Space World 1996, and Nintendo even let out that it was interested in taking over publishing duties, Rev Limit subsequently disappeared from Japanese and US release lists. Eventually, it was delayed indefinitely, which was of course strange at the time, since it was pretty far in development. Nevertheless, the game looked pretty promising, especially since the conversion allowed it to have some really interesting improvements. It was to include several different modes of play, including a sprint race mode (races of between three and ten laps), long distance races (between twenty and fifty laps), a test racing mode, an innovative simulation mode (in which the players would've controlled a racer's career) and, of course, a standard arcade mode. Why was Rev Limit cancelled? The details are scarce, but it seems the game's developer, Seta, ran into financial difficulty and many of its projects were cancelled before completion. There are no incomplete ROMs online, or test cartridges, which means there's no way to play even an early build of the racer. It seems most of the photos published in magazines, and even the footage from Space World 1996, were taken from an incomplete arcade build running on Seta's Aleck64 board. For those not familiar with it, the Aleck64 was an arcade board based on the N64 hardware co-developed by Seta and Nintendo in the late 90s, which only made it into several coin-op machines before it too was cancelled. Rev Limit was one of the most talked about N64 games (it appeared many times in magazines such as N64, CVG and Games Master), and the fact that it was cancelled makes it one of the most fascinating unseen projects for the 64-bit console.

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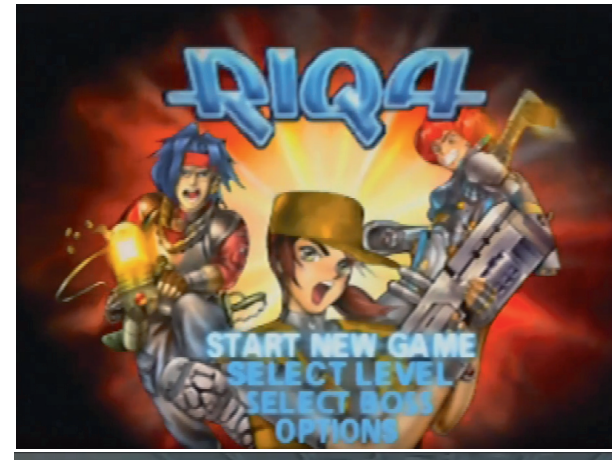
RIQA

Article by: James Alan Griffiths, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The original Playstation's success within the marketplace can be attributed - although not exclusively - to a wealth of new franchises whose target audiences were young adults. Quite possibly the most high profile franchise was Eidos' Tomb Raider. Series' protagonist and heroine Lara Croft was - and we don't use this term lightly - a cultural phenomenon back in the mid and late '90s. Previous to the release of the first title in 1996, there weren't many female leads in video games, and certainly not many promoted and sexualized as much as she was. This, along with the quality of gameplay and 3D graphic, captured the imagination of players around



the world - an unprecedented media frenzy and a slew of sequels and similar titles that followed. The success of Tomb Raider could have been one of the inspirations for Riqa, a female-lead action adventure planned for the Nintendo 64, and announced at the E3 gaming expo in 1999. Rumors about the title were published by IGN as early as November 1998, when they reported the registration of the Riqa domain name: "Willy, the valet parker over at Nintendo of America told me that he accidentally walked into a secret meeting last Friday and saw some stuff he wasn't supposed to see. Peter Main, Howard Lincoln, Jim Merrick, Perin Kaplan - everyone was there. And then there was RIQA. Well, not really. On a board behind the Big N crew, some busy soul had scribbled countless new names, from top to bottom: RIQA, Siras, E-Siras... That's when Jim Merrick kicked Willy out of the room. Don't ask me what those titles are, but they're apparently important enough for Nintendo to register websites for... Hmmmm..." In development by Bits Studios since 1997 and due to be published by Nintendo themselves, Riqa was an ambitious project that blend together third-person exploration, puzzles, RPG and shooting gameplay. The footage shown at E3 was very impressive for its time and N64 owners were pumped to see a more "mature" action game for their console. Besides the main character named Riqa, two more playable characters (male and female) were also planned for the final game. Unfortunately, details about the project were still scarce at the time: gaming magazines and websites quickly related the game's main female protagonist with Tomb Raider's heroine Lara Croft, but the comparison was quite unfair, as RiQa was planned to be a much more complex game. Bits Studios and Nintendo wanted to create a huge action RPG for a new generation of gamers used to fast-pace shooting combat and third person exploration. Under its "Tomb Raider" look, Riqa had gameplay mechanics inspired by classic action RPGs, as experience stats and a LV-UP system, health and magic points, elemental alignments, status effects, cities to explore, NPCs to talk to, a 3D earth used as a world-map, to move across different places on the globe and a series of equipments, weapons, armors and other items. With such a high-profile project, Nintendo asked Bits Studios to predispone the game to be compatible with the planned 64DD add-on, so that new expansions could have been released in the future, just like for Zelda: Ocarina of Time. In the few videos available, Riqa's seen using an impressive arsenal: a grenade launchers, 3-ways laser guns and sniper rifles, against a largely human and robotic army - suggesting a plot and setting within some sort of mechanised dystopia. Other than shooting in third person view, players would also have been able to aim in first person, to improve their precision. Riqa quickly moves around the levels and seems pretty adept at dodging enemy fire, a skill the player would have been allowed to thanks to the accurate movement offered by the N64's analogue stick. We can see glimpses of puzzles, with computers and shields to deactivate in the correct order and a huge brightly coloured game-board style set up. We can also see a few cities, bars and buildings with friendly non-playable characters available to talk, to sell items and to give new quests to the players. While the world of Riqa was divided into different, not directly

connected areas (cities, warehouses, labs, enemy bases, caverns, deserts, japanese temples, etc.), thanks to the map we could have been able to freely choose where to move among dozens of different locations from all around the world, depending on the current mission. The ambitious plans for Riqa unfortunately remained obscure to the gaming press at the time, and with no updates about the game, early rumors about its cancellation spread online late in 1999. Against all odds, in January 2000 IGN reported that the game was still on track: "At last year's Electronics Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, Nintendo previewed brief snippets of a previously unknown Nintendo 64 action-adventure called RIQA. The 3D title, which looked like a cross between Tomb Raider and Mission: Impossible, was not playable and extremely early in development, but it showed promise all the same. Since that time, Nintendo has not uttered a single word on the game, which has led many in the industry to question its status. The good news is that it's still very alive. We spoke with UK based developer Bits Studios about the project today and were reassured that while Nintendo is reluctant to release any new information on the game, everything is going smoothly behind the scenes." As we know today, that was not the case: being shown late into the Nintendo 64 lifecycle and not even nearly completed , Riqa was destined for cancellation. With the new generation of consoles (Playstation 2, Gamecube, Xbox) just around the corner, publishing a new title for an old-generation console with a dying userbase was not a good idea. Despite an enthusiastic reaction to the footage by Nintendo-centric and multi format games magazines at the time, Riqa was cancelled along with Die Hard 64 and another N64 game by Bits Studios known as Thieves World. Unfortunately, Riqa was an ambitious project slowed down by the limits of the console and by the game's engine iteration cycle, with levels made in Max that had to wait for long manufacturing times before to get them on console. Nintendo and Bits Studios decided that it would have been difficult to successfully complete the Riqa project in time to be profitable. When Riqa was cancelled early in 2000, for a few months Thieves World became the new focus for Bits Studios, thanks to its new easy-to-use engine created by Nathanael Presson and Frederic Villain ,that permitted to easily develop the game in a short time. Their hopes was to be able to release Thieves World before the final death of the Nintendo 64. Unfortunately the development was still not fast enough: Thieves World was moved to "next gen consoles" becoming a tie-in game under the "Nikita" IP - based on the TV show that was on around that time, and it was finally released in 2003 as Rogue Ops, published by Kemco on GameCube, PS2 and Xbox. Playable character Nikki Connors is described as an ex-green beret, in what may be a wry meta-reference to Riqa, since this was the headgear favoured by that game's protagonist. Sadly, Rogue Ops didn't capture the hearts of gamers as it was poorly received by critics and failed to sell particularly well. Bits Studios would eventually cease operations in 2008, leaving behind a wealth of licensed games and a good number of cancelled projects. It wouldn't be long before Nintendo released another Nintendo 64 game with a female lead, in 2000's Perfect Dark, developed by second party gaming legends Rare. It's interesting to notice that another lost N64 game, Mission

Impossible 2 by Ocean Software / Infogrames, was also switched into a Nikita tie-in for "128-bit consoles", before being finally canned. Riqa looked like an interesting action adventure that could have become another must-have for Nintendo 64 owners. We can only speculate about the commercial and cultural effect of Riqa at the time, which joins a number of other high profile proposed N64 experiences that never saw the light of day.

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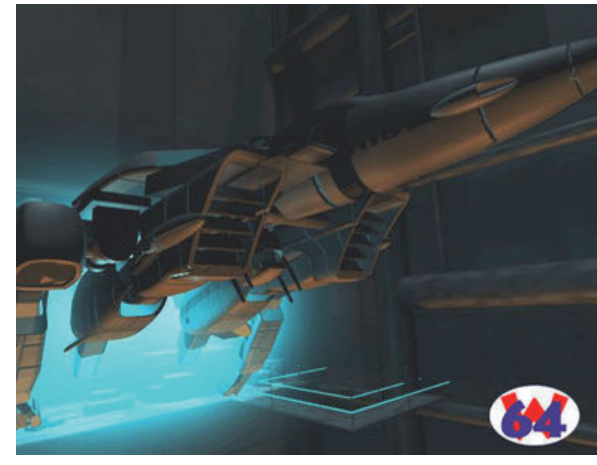
ROBOTECH CRYSTAL DREAMS

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



Robotech: Crystal Dreams is a Nintendo 64 space fighter created by GameTek, originally slated for release in 1996. It was based on the eponymous sci-fi cartoon saga, which was actually the U.S. adaptation of three different Japanese anime series. In July 1994, GameTek, known at the time for video game renditions of shows like Wheel of Fortune or Jeopardy!, brought the cartoon's rights from Harmony Gold, and started developing a title called Robotech Academy, which was eventually announced in February 1995. In this game, the main character would have been a cadet being trained with combat simulators in order to be prepared for the imminent coming of the evil Zentraedi soldiers. Academy was supposed to be available at the Nintendo 64 American launch (September 1996), but by the end of 1995 most of the work had to be scrapped because it had been developed with an outdated Ultra 64 development system. At the same time, the main programmer, Ian Harac, was thinking about a new scenario, set a century or a two after the ending of the show, in which the player freely roamed the universe as a mercenary. However, Robotech: Crystal dreams was officially born only with the hiring, in December 1995, of Doug Lanford, a programmer and story designer but, above all, a huge fan of the original show. He and Harac went then immediately to conceive an open-ended space fighter where the player could explore at will a full-scale reproduction of the solar system and decide which mission do next. For example, we might leave a battle near Earth and answer a call for help from a convoy near Saturn that was under attack. Such an action would however hurt the relationship with our allies and alter the following events, due to a system called Multi Branching ChronoSync Algorithm that changed the world in response of the choices made. The player controlled the combat mecha Veritech, which had three freely switchable forms, each one with its own weakness and strengths: Fighter, Guardian and Battleloid. For instance, the powerful nose laser could only be used by the Fighter, while in the latter two forms we had the possibility of aim our shots and fly vertically or backwards. Though almost all the screenshots of Robotech

show the action from the cockpit, the player could also switch to an external camera. The three main types of attack were lasers, missiles and gun pods, but additional weapons could also be obtained. Other than for buying upgrades, the cash earned from finishing the missions had to be used to refuel the mechs. The story of Crystal Dreams, which narrated ex-RDF pilot Kyle Bartley's involvement in the war against the mysterious crystal-like enemies Ebolians, was created specifically for this game, even if recurrent characters of the series like Rick Hunter and Max Sterling had a large role in the plot. While initially the dialogue was planned to be text-only, according to its creators the final version of Robotech would have featured about forty minutes of spoken audio, though not from the original show's voice cast. Of course, what the characters said also changed according to your behaviour. Interestingly, in the early stages of development, nobody at GameTek knew how powerful the final Nintendo 64 hardware was going to be, and consequently the Ebolians were selected as the main antagonists because programmers found that they could have many low-resolution, crystal-like models on screen without using too many resources. A short demo of Robotech was presented at E3 1996. In March 1997, Philips media, the company that was supposed to publish the game, went out of business. However, a few months before Crystal Dreams was cancelled, Capcom made a deal with GameTek for distributing and marketing the game. Robotech proved to be a project far too time-consuming and difficult for a small software-house like GameTek, which didn't have the budget necessary to hire enough manpower or buy expensive development tools. Thus, in December 1997, the American company filed for bankruptcy, "in order to re-work and settle internal debts." according to an old IGN preview. Another build of Robotech was shown at E3 1998 and the programming team continued to work on it as late as July of the same year, when finally GameTek closed doors. Shortly after, Doug Lanford demoed the final build of Crystal Dreams to some companies, but nothing came of it. In a 1999 interview with Console Domain, Doug said that Robotech was 90% complete, but "lacking any of the game story or the mission creator. Another two, possibly three months, and the game would have been complete, aside from some testing and approval." However, in a 2002 interview with Robotech.com, he stated, more realistically, that "We still probably had 5 or 6 months of work before we would've had even a beta version of the game". A Japanese port of the game, called Macross: Another Dimension (the anime on which Robotech is based), was slated to be published by Tomi, but the Japanese company never obtained a distribution license from rights holder Bandai; it's thus unknown if Crystal Dreams would have been released in Japan even if finished. In December 2000, a rom of the game anonymously leaked on the Internet. In September 2001, Doug Lanford released the alpha version of Crystal Dreams on his website. This build let fans finally try some (largely unfinished) missions, but the most interesting features promised by the developers were nowhere to be found. Interestingly, the rom included a functional death match for four players. Other multiplayer modes, like a cooperative battle against an enemy ship or shooting and racing contests, were also originally planned.

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VIEWPOINT 2064

Article by: Sebastian Zavala, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Viewpoint 2064 is a cancelled shoot 'em up game that was planned for the Nintendo 64, to be published by Sammy Corporation, the same studio that developed (through its subsidiary Aicom) and published the original Viewpoint for arcades and Neo-Geo in 1992. After many ports of the first game, 2064 would have been the official Viewpoint sequel that fans asked for, planned to be an exclusive for the Nintendo 64, a console that proved to be perfect for 3D on-rails shooter thanks to such masterpieces as Sin & Punishment and Star Fox 64. True to its title, Viewpoint 2064 was going to have multiple points of view, with the classic isometric view and a "behind the spaceship" view. It was uncertain if these views could be selected or if the cameras would shift dynamically during gameplay. Also, despite its similarities with Star Fox, your craft was limited to movement in the horizontal plane only - consistent with the original Viewpoint. The game had great graphics for its time, clear and smooth, even if with some distant fogging to keep the framerate up. Although Viewpoint 2064's weapons were nothing special, Sammy did come up with an interesting lock-on system that displayed a vector-based graphical interface when targeting enemy ships. Moreover, the game included laser-firing drone fighters that accompanied one's ship, as well as the Viewpoint-typical "insect" theme for enemies. Viewpoint 2064 also promised to include epic boss battles. The game's host of mechanical creatures, such as a giant robot moth, was impressively rendered, with huge and fairly detailed ship models that furiously bombarded the player with lasers and missiles. In short, Viewpoint 2064 promised to be a really fun shooter title. Sadly, Sammy had some technical problems during the game's development phase. It was cancelled only a year after his presentation at both the Tokyo Game Show '99 and SpaceWorld 1999, even though it was slated to be released on November of that year. In September 2015, a playable beta was sold on eBay and it's currently owned by an unknown collector, who later released a long gameplay video on YouTube. It seems that this beta version of Viewpoint 2064 was almost finished as you can play all the level through the end. There are multiple secret paths to discover that unlock different levels: there are a total of 15 areas but to finish the game you must play through 5 of them, somehow similar to StarFox 64. After the cancellation of Viewpoint 2064, Sammy continued publishing games for various consoles and arcades, such as the Guilty Gear series. In 2004 they merged with Sega to create the holding company Sega-Sammy. Viewpoint never had a proper sequel and it remains a cult hit for shmup lovers.

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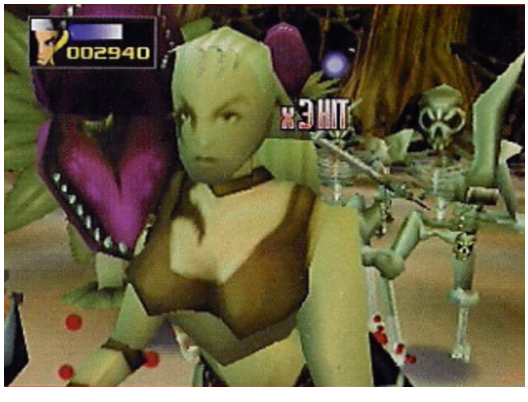
DRAGON SWORD

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Dragon Sword, AKA Dragon Storm, is a cancelled co-op hack & slash that was in development in 1998. It was being developed by Team Storm at Interactive Studios, renamed as Blitz Games in 1999, a software house



mostly know for Glover, one of the best Nintendo 64 platformers that was not made by Nintendo or Rare. Dragon Sword would have been set in a fantasy world called Avantaria, where a group of four heroes had to stop the evil plans of Xyrus, an evil mage. Dragon Sword originally had a strong emphasis on exploration and adventure elements, as the team wanted to create a game like Zelda, but while the project was in development they had to downgrade this concept. This was probably because they were lacking in time and funds, as explained to IGN64 in September 1999 by Ian Pestridge (Assistant creative manager at Interactive Studio). Dragon Sword became a frenetic hack n slash, similar to many of the memorable arcade games of the past such as Gauntlet or Golden Axe. The game was divided into different levels to be completed one after another, there were hordes of enemies to kill and generators that must be destroyed in order to avoid the respawn of monsters. One or two players were able to play through the main campaign together in co-op, choosing from four different characters, each one with their own set of attacks and abilities. Players would also be able to play a fun four player deathmatch/brawler mode that was more enjoyable than some of the standard fighting games released on the N64. Unfortunately with Dragon Sword's downgrade many of the promised features were removed, such as the presence of different weather conditions, large and varied environments to explore, an RPG-like experience and level-up system, magic spell system and most of the planned weapons. In the concept art from the early days of the project we can see many scenes that were never developed into the “final” game such as a town filled with people and the possibility of riding a dragon to explore the world. As told by Ian Pestridge to IGN64: "Originally we were going to have riding beasts. We'd still like that and the characters are ready to go, but it's all about time and cart space, so it may have to go. Another loser is the ability to change into a dragon and fight in mid-air. The dragons have gone but we are still messing with the idea of an ultimate transformation for you." Even with many problems and cuts Interactive studios were almost able to complete Dragon Sword and only a few weeks of work and debugging would have been needed to finish it, but like many other N64 titles it was destined to never see the light of day. The game was cancelled because MGM Interactive, their publisher, thought that it would have not sell enough to gain profit and it would have been cheaper to not release it. Not all was lost though: in April 2010 a beta version of Dragon Sword was leaked online and after 12 years gamers were finally be able to play this unreleased N64 title. In the leaked version you can fight your way through the first seven worlds available from the planned ten, two more worlds can be unlocked with Gameshark codes, only the final area is missing and even the deathmatch multiplayer with four people can be played. There are some bugs and sometimes the game crashes in emulators, but the game is still fun today, especially if you can play it in co-op mode with a friend. Dragon Sword was not the only N64 game to be canned from Interactive Studios/Blitz Games as they also had to cancel their Glover sequel, probably due to a similar decision by their publisher. After the failure of their last N64 projects the team switched to “next gen” consoles (Xbox, PS2, GameCube) and worked on different games for kids and family, such as Fusion Frenzy (Xbox), Bratz Girlz (Xbox 360) and SpongeBob's Surf & Skate Roadtrip (Xbox 360). In September 2013 Blitz Games had to close down after they were unable to secure funds to sustain their business.

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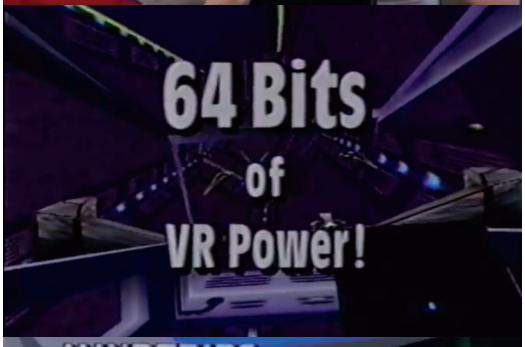
Hasbro Toaster VR

Article by: Damiano Bacci (Blek)

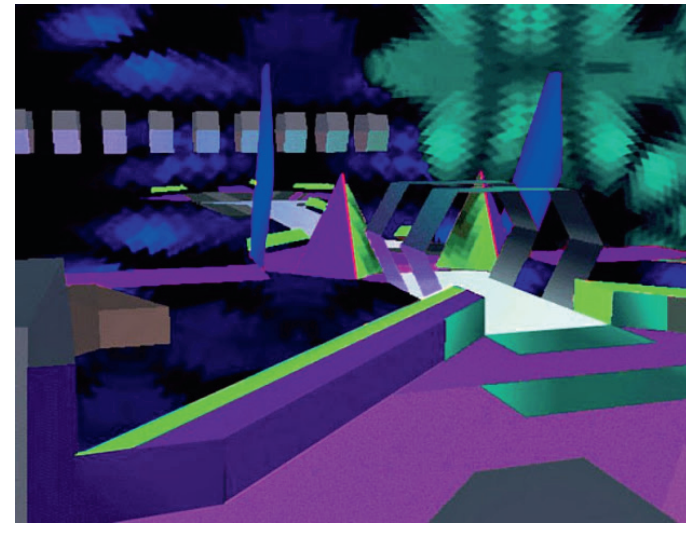
You're probably heard of the giant multinational toy and board game company Hasbro, but you might not have heard anything about their first and only foray into virtual reality: the Hasbro Toaster. Hasbro was created in 1924 by the three Hassenfeld brothers. They started out in the textile industry, but it wasn't long before they switched to the toy industry and rose to the top. However, following the enormous success of the Atari 2600 and its cartridge based system, Hasbro sought the possibility to enter the now-booming video game market. The acquisition of Milton Bradley (the company responsible for the VecTrex) in 1984 was an early step in that direction. Hasbro began to plan the development of a new gaming console, and two different projects were conceived: Control-Vision (originally known as Project NEMO) and Toaster VR. Both projects have a very interesting development history stretching over a long period of time, but unfortunately they both ended up canceled at the end. The market would be left without another console competitor during the 16 and 32 bit generations. The Toaster was a joint-venture project between David Sarnoff Research Centre (DSRC) in New Jersey, Quantum Works Corporation (QWC) in California, and Abrams/Gentile Entertainment (AGE) in New York. It's worth noting that AGE is the same company responsible for the creation of Mattel's Power Glove for the Nintendo Entertainment System, which probably hinted at the future of the Toaster. Backed by the successful partnership with Mattel, in 1992 AGE pitched the idea of a Virtual Reality console to Hasbro. They joined with with Steve E. Tice and his company QWC, whose main task within the VR project was overcoming all the problems related to the Head Mounted Display. The original codename for this new device was "Sliced Bread Project" and, of course, it encountered many technical challenges related to the Virtual Reality experience. The system was required to be light and cheap in order to sell in the market, which only made the technical difficulties even worse. Realistic and correct perspective image generation was the primary project issue, although there were also issues with the device reacting immediately to the player's head movement. Backed by DSRC's knowledge and resources, a prototype was assembled and early game concepts began to develop. As a former developer of the console remembers: "By the summer of 1995, five games were demonstrated on the complete system of hardware and software, and tested by the 16-year-old son of one of the group leaders." With such a long and complex development, the Toaster console went under different names (like Xscape and Rush) and the game format was changed from cartridges to CD-ROMS. The estimated hardware retail doubled with the changes, and the project was delayed again to the 1996 holiday season. The aforementioned developer also remembered: "Hasbro had spent $45 million in three years and was due to spend another $22 million on advertising Rush. Tens of millions more would go toward further innovation and inventory. Keeping it or killing it would cost money that would displease the board of directors." The final decision to pull the plug on the Toaster was made by former Hasbro CEO Alan Hassenfeld himself; despite having spent millions of dollars and having overcome tremendous technical difficulties, the company decided to follow a safer way to enter in the videogame market. This safer entry came in the form of Hasbro Interactive, formed in late 1995, a new company division focusing on porting their most famous games (like Monopoly and Scrabble) to modern consoles. According to a paper by the Tuck School of Management: "The company created a brand with a traditional board game or toy, and then translated the concept to video. They never started a game or toy development project with video in mind - they waited to see if the traditional project would succeed first." Thus, the ambitious Hasbro VR Project was cancelled. Hasbro Interactive continued to grow in the following years, with titles like Frogger becoming a top seller on the Playstation, and with the acquisition of companies like Microprose and Avalon Hill. With the Hasbro Toaster canceled and its only head mount display sent to a lost gaming studio, all games in development for the hardware were canceled. There were working ports of popular titles like Magic Carpet and Descent, plus original titles conceived exclusively for the console, such as Lancelot's Quest, Faceball, Nero Zero, and Holosports Fighter. In the following pages we'll take a look at Shatterman, one of the most obscure games planned for the Hasbro VR, and we'll try to find out what happened to the team that was working on it.

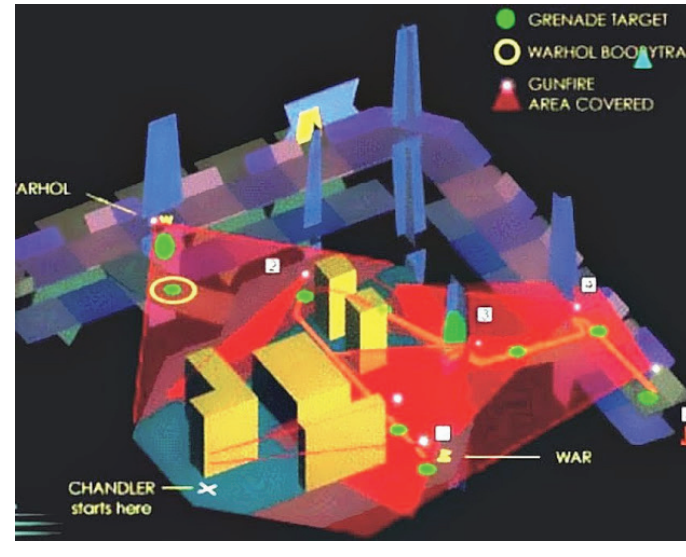
Hasbro VR: proposed TV ads



SHATTERMAN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





Shatterman is one of the few games in development for the ill-fated Hasbro Toaster by Angel Studios (the modern Rockstar San Diego). The studio was founded in 1984 to create computer graphic videos for such projects as the legendary movie Lawnmower Man (1992). We don't know if Hasbro was impressed by the first person shooting segments of Lawnmower Man or if Angel Studios was chosen by coincidence, but those parts in the film could give us an idea about how Shatterman could have been conceived. At the time Angel Studios was still mostly a CG video production company. In fact, most of Shatterman's team were recent college grads with little to no experience working on a commercial game. However, they did have all the hardware needed to create awesome looking games thanks to Silicon Graphics workstations, one of the most powerful hardware at the time. This probably helped them join the legendary "Dream Team", a group of studios organized by Nintendo in the mid '90 to create ambitious games for the "Project Reality" (the early codename for the Nintendo 64). Shatterman could have been Angel Studios first game if the Hasbro Toaster was released in. It would take one more year until they were able to release their actual first commercial game: Mr. Bones for the Sega Saturn. Hasbro Toaster's graphical power was probably over-hyped at the time as in reality its games would have looked somehow like a mix between Chip FX powered SNES games (StarFox) and early 3D arcade games (Virtua Racing or Virtual Fighter), with texture-less polygons and vivid colors. As recalled by Allen Battino, former Angel Studios' Senior Art Director: "I don't remember much about Shatterman, but what I do remember is that he was designed to have the least amount of polygons possible while having a heroic look that would be glasslike and break up in shards effectively." While the default play view mode was third-person (with the camera right behind the in-game character), players would view the action through their VR goggles as in some kind of direct first person view. Once hit by too many shots, the character would break into pieces in a quite impressive effect (for the time). There's not too much information known about Shatterman's story. The plot would follow the life of Shatterman, a futuristic film-noir-inspired detective, who would drive from location to location as he takes out the bad guys. Why he was driving and where he was driving remains cloudy, however the driving sections should be noted. Angel Studios was responsible for pioneering open world racing games with the popular PC-exclusive Midtown Madness in 1999. Unfortunately, Hasbro's technology and lack of real hardware made things a bit complex to create. As noted by Paul Skibitzke, one of the programmers that worked on Shatterman: "The VR features we supported (3D rendering, stereoscopic rendering, head tracking) were not at all difficult to develop or use in a videogame. They'd been supported on our Silicon Graphics (SGI) hardware for a couple of years at that point, and the Angel Studios game engine was built with support for them. However, actually using those technologies was hard on the body and mind.

Between low frame rates, low goggle resolution, slow head tracking, and sheer weight of the goggles, you were likely to get nauseous and/or a sore neck after 15 minutes of using the hardware. So most of the time, we would test the game from the computer monitor, without goggles. As far as the features of Hasbro platform itself, all our work was done on SGIs. We never actually got any Hasbro hardware! We were told that it would effectively be a game console, with orientation-sensing 3D goggles, and a controller." Only a single combat area and an early city driving prototype were completed before work on the project stopped. For Angel Studios, Shatterman was an interesting proof of concept for the anticipated platform, but the lack of actual hardware to develop on made it clear that it was useless to plan a whole game for a vaporware console. Shatterman was not the last virtual reality game that Angel Studios worked on.Their experience with VR helped them sign a contract with Disney to create the Virtual Jungle Cruise at DisneyQuest in 1998, which is still available in Disney World Resort in Orlando. After releasing some other important games for various consoles, such as the Resident Evil 2 port for the N64, the Midtown Madness series, and Smuggler's Run, Angel Studios was bought by Take-two in 2003 and renamed Rockstar San Diego. They then moved on to work on such popular titles as Red Dead Revolver, Midnight Club and Grand Theft Auto V.

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Interviews with former Angel Studios developers

Hasbro VR: console mockups

3DO - Panasonic M2

Article by: Nicolas Dunai

Despite the original 3DO Console having a less than stellar reception, 3DO Company put efforts into another attempt at the console market with the M2. Co-designed by Dave Needle and R. J. Mical, the M2 was originally planned as an add-on chip for the 3DO Console to give it a Power PC microprocessor, but was upgraded to a full fledged console during development. The M2 was first shown off at the 1995 Electronic Entertainment Expo at a dedicated press conference held by 3DO Company. The event was to show the power their hardware had in comparison to other home consoles at the time, such as the Sony Playstation, Sega Saturn, and the Sega 32X. This was done with a series of tech demos to showcase its advantages over the competition, even going as far as to comparing their racing game tech demo to games such as Ridge Racer, Daytona USA, and Virtua Racing. All footage shown as potential games had incredible graphics for their time, however it was all pre-rendered and did not, in fact, reflect games that would come out as shown some years later by the leaked prototype of IMSA Racing. With the best of intentions, 3DO Company sold the rights of the M2 to Matsushita, hoping to to find a stable manufacturer for the console as they did not manufacture their consoles themselves. Those intentions would later be for naught, however. Matsushita decided on cancelling all plans for the M2 in 1997 due to not having faith in the console to compete with the PlayStation and Nintendo 64. Amongst the planned M2 games we can find such titles as Kenji Eno's D2 and the previously mentioned IMSA Racing. While a D2 would see release on the Sega Dreamcast many years later, it was an entirely different project than the game initially developed for the M2. IMSA Racing, however, would only see release when an ISO for the game would be leaked onto the internet in 2010. Even with the M2 never seeing the light of day as a home console, the hardware still found use with it becoming an incredibly short lived arcade board for Konami. Games on this board include Battle Tryst, Hell / Evil Night (unrelated to the Atlus game of the same name) and Polystar. Konami's games using the M2 hardware closely resemble games released on the Dreamcast with the exception of Hell / Evil Night, which is closer to a Saturn or PlayStation title. In the following pages, we'll take a look at a couple of curious tech demos that show how PR and marketing sometimes really try to hard to sell graphics that the product will never be able to achieve.

3DO
PANASONIC
M2

SHOOTER

Article by: Nicolas Dunai

Simply known as Shooter and sometimes Dungeon, this is one of the few tech demos shown off by The 3DO Company to showcase the power of their upcoming (at the time) M2 hardware. Very much like the racing game tech demo shown around this time, it was hyped as actual footage of what a game would be like on their "powerful" new console. The truth is, both tech demos consisted of pre-rendered footage, with HUD overlays to convey that these were real games in development. At the time, the graphic for this tech demo was jaw dropping, being much more detailed than what other consoles were able to do. The footage we have of Shooter consists of the player moving through a small cave in first person, before ending up inside a more refined room. As soon as the demo starts, a throwing star is seen flying towards the player from an armored monster. In retaliation, a shot is fired and subsequently blocked by the monster's shield before another shot decapitates the beast. After reaching a flight of stairs, the player turns to the left and a hidden passageway is unveiled. The player chooses to go up some stairs, which lead to a door. The door is blasted away by gunfire, to reveal what appears to be a lounge, filled with various works of art including a revolving model of a helmet in addition to a working mirror. After looking at his reflection, the player is alarmed by a noise which is revealed to be a monster forming out of the ground. This enemy puts up more of a fight, even going back into the ground and sneaking up on the player by coming out of a portrait. The monster meets it's end as it pounces towards the player and is shot, before disintegrating; it's skin dissolving to reveal internal organs before becoming an incredible (at the time) particle effect showcase of spherical monster remains, flying towards the player. One of these spheres contains the monster's model inside of it as it flies at the screen, ending the demo. We don't know if 3DO ever wanted to develop a real game out of this tech demo, but in hindsight it was unlikely that they would ever able to create anything playable that looked as good as they wanted us to believe.

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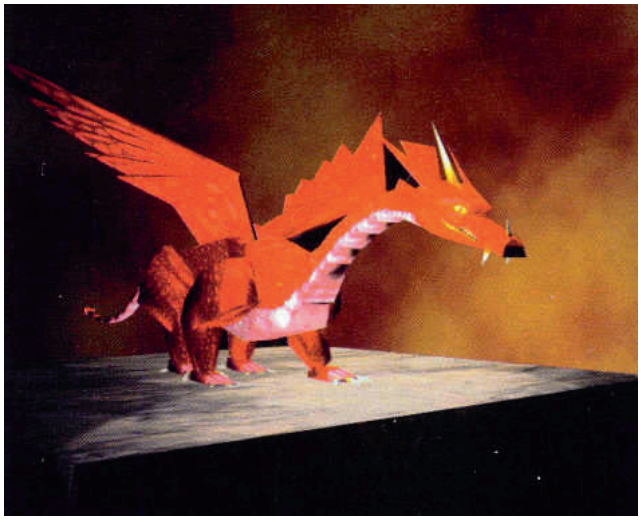
POWER CRYSTAL

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Power crystal is an action role-playing game developed by Perceptions LTD for the ill-fated Panasonic M2 in 1997. Andrew Whittaker, Perceptions' CEO, had already worked on some important PC titles (like Dark Seed), but his largest role was working as the main programmer of Alien Versus Predator for the Jaguar. Impressed by the latter's quality, 3DO asked the newfounded Perceptions LTD to create games to showcase the powerful hardware of their new M2 console. The few images released for Power Crystal were probably target renders, but at the time they displayed an incredible 3D graphical ability, with detailed characters and an interactive fantasy world to explore. Power Crystal's story revolved around seven pieces of a fragmented crystal that held the balance of power in the world of Kelemar. In order to obtain the necessary magic power to stop an invading army, the player had to retrieve all seven pieces. However, the payer was given plenty of freedom when it came to completing quests and following the story. They were able to collect the crystal pieces in whatever sequence you preferred, using their power to save the world or destroy it alongside the bad guys! The game's world was planned to be over 20.000 square miles, with around 10.000 enemy creatures and humans roaming the land.The player could travel across the world on foot, on horseback, and even on a boat. Power Crystal was even supposed to feature a day-night circle (a in-game day lasted one real time hour) and different weather conditions, including rain, snow, and fog.Every building of the world could be entered, and once inside the camera would have adopted a fixed point in a top corner of the room. Moreover, according to Whittaker, the player could freely choose how to progress through the game and what skills to focus on: "Every player starts his or her life in an identical manner, with the same status. The character evolves and grows by the same way that they live their life. If the player fights a lot they get better at it, as in real life, or if they trade a lot, the player will became a skilled trader." In late '90s this game would have been a dream come true for RPG fanatics, an ambitious project that if ever realized would have probably became the "must- buy" for the M2 console. Unfortunately, Power Crystal was cancelled after Matsushita decided to shelve the M2 console for good. Perceptions LTD tried briefly to port the game to PC, but, for reasons currently unknown, the work was never



finished. Perceptions closed down shortly after, cancelling a few other titles along the way, such as a 3D platformer called Jester, a unnamed 3D puzzle game, and a 3D tank fighter called Flagfight. In an attempt to preserve more documents on Power Crystal, gaming journalist and historian John Szczepaniak contacted Andrew Whittaker multiple times, even going as far as to call all the people with the same surname in the city where he used to live. Even though this strategy was successful, ultimately leading to a telephone conversation with Andrew himself and multiple emails, all attempts by John and Unseen64 to gather more info on Power Crystal fell flat. As far as we know, today Whittaker lives on an island in the UK, working as an aviation journalist, and developer for flight simulators and entertainment software. In the last few years Andrew legally changed his name to "Jane Rachel Jasmine" to raise awareness of charity work for underprivileged children.

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Game.com

Article by: Silvio Carréra

American company Tiger Electronics started developing handheld electronic games and educational toys back in the late 1970s, but they rose to prominence in the early 1990s for their work on handheld LCD handled games based on licensed properties such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Double Dragon and Street Fighter II. Following this success, they decided to make their own cartridge based handhelds. Their third and last attempt at a portable console was the Game.com, which was released in 1997 to compete with the juggernaut that was Nintendo's Game Boy. The handheld ended up being a commercial failure, being discontinued in 2001 after only having a total of 21 games released for it. The Game.com still had some interesting features and boasted many novel functions ahead of its time like built-in PDA features such as a phone book, calendar, and a calculator. It was also able to access the internet via an external dial-up modem connected to the Game.com via a serial port. From there users were able to upload their game highscores, check your email and view the web though this was text only. Due to Tiger's strong connection with third party publishers the Game.com was able to get on board several big IPs like Resident Evil and Sonic. The launch window included Indy 500, Duke Nukem 3D and Mortal Kombat Trilogy, along with Lights Out (bundled with the system) and Solitaire which was built in the system ROM. In the following years, the handheld's problems started to show up. The small lineup (21 games), lack of third party support, poor distribution and poor marketing ended up being Tiger's doom. The handheld even had two other versions, the Pocket Pro and Pro, but the improvements didn't make up for all of the issues it had and Tiger discontinued the system in 2000. Nonetheless aside from the 21 games released there were 9 other titles known that ended up being canceled. Two of these will be discussed on the following pages: Castlevania Symphony of the Night and Metal Gear Solid.

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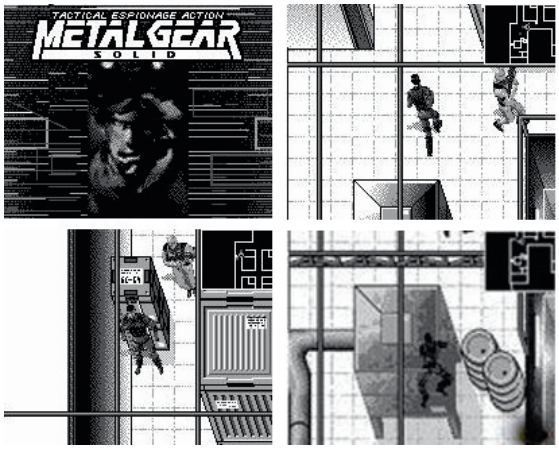
METAL GEAR SOLID



Article by: Silvio Carréra

In the Game.com's short lifespan, we are aware of nine games that were canceled and amongst these was a game based on the PlayStation's massively popular Metal Gear Solid. As part of the licensing process, it was common for Tiger to produce mock-up screenshots in order to pitch them to license holders and get their attention. They were able to convince Konami to sign a licensing deal for not only Metal Gear Solid, but Castlevania as well. These games were announced right after the release of the handheld. By looking at the mock-up screenshots for Metal Gear Solid, it's safe to speculate that they were probably aiming to have the gameplay play out in a similar fashion to the original MSX2 version of Metal Gear, as well as Metal Gear Solid: Ghost Babel for the Game Boy Color. Boasting a top down view with a classic map on the top left of the screen, players would be able to shimmy up to walls and crawl under areas, as per Metal Gear 2 (also on the MSX). Though there are sources that indicate the existence of a demo video of the game being played, it's nowhere to be found on the internet. For now it's safer to say that the game never really went through the mock-up stage and was later canned for good, following the demise of the Game.com.

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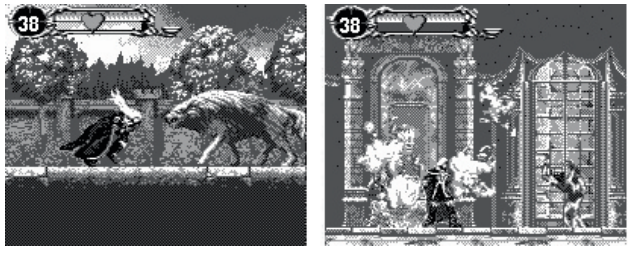
CASTLEVANIA SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT



Article by: Silvio Carréra

Tiger's deal with Konami fetched not only Metal Gear but Castlevania in as well. Their take was to make a handheld version of the acclaimed Castlevania Symphony of the Night for Playstation and Saturn, a title that shocked the games industry with its release. Contradicting the popular trend of going 3D at the time, Konami decided to use its 2D expertise to create a masterpiece, not only for the series but for gaming as a whole. To this day, Symphony of the Night is still praised and talked about as one of the highest quality titles ever produced. Following other titles released for the Game.com, we can assume that this would be a downgraded port of the original PSX release. The gameplay would go as untouched as possible, probably with some features being cut out due to the handheld's processing limitation. The poor, limiting color scheme and audio capabilities would struggle to do the original game any justice.Like in the Metal Gear Game.com version, this one would probably be developed by Tiger's internal development team. Unfortunately, this is another project that probably never went past the mock-up stage as well. All that is left is a few screenshots and a wonder if this would have been anything close to the original. Not long after the Game.com was discontinued in 2000, the following year Konami released Castlevania: Circle of the Moon for the GBA. The game went on to become a classic and paved the way for series of high quality handheld titles released afterwards.

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Dreamcast

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

One of the most beloved consoles ever made was the last one released by Sega: the Dreamcast is surely a cult hit among hardcore gamers. Released in November 1998 in Japan, and late 1999 in America and Europe, the Dreamcast was the first "128 bit" hardware available after the 5th generation of consoles and a huge step forward for 3D graphics. After the failure of the Sega Saturn, the company tried to act quickly and invested into a powerful machine able to run their Naomi arcade titles. Some of the most successful titles for the Saturn were ports of popular arcade games and Sega planned to offer such frenetic and graphically impressive titles for their next console. They also made sure the Dreamcast was easy to develop for and created what fans were asking for years: a new, fully 3D Sonic game. Due to its technology and interesting arcade games, the Dreamcast attracted quite a bit of attention and many pre-orders. The Japanese launch was successful and the Dreamcast was soon sold out, but there were still just a few titles available: July, Godzilla Generations, Pen Pen Trilcelon and Virtua Fighter 3tb. The American and European launches had many more great games available, with such titles as Blue Stinger, Expendable, The House of the Dead 2, Hydro Thunder, Mortal Kombat Gold, NFL 2K, Power Stone, Sega Rally Championship 2, Toy Commander, Sonic Adventure and SoulCalibur. In North America, Sega set a new sales record by selling more than 225,000 units in just a day, with a profit of about $98 million. By looking at these great numbers, it's still strange to think about what happened later. After just a couple of years, in January 2001, Sega announced the discontinuation of the Dreamcast and the restructuring of the company as a third-party developer: they would not release new hardware and would start developing games for all their former competitors. The Dreamcast price was reduced to $99 in the US to get rid of all their unsold systems. Fans of the console were shocked and even many development studios that were working on DC games did not see this kind of announcement coming. Unfortunately, Sega was not able to compete with Sony's PS2. The more powerful hardware, DVD compatibility and popular brand, and supported by important exclusive games (such as Final Fantasy or Metal Gear Solid) that would not have been available on the Dreamcast. In the end, Sega managed to sell "only" 9 million units before the Dreamcast demise, and its best-selling game was Sonic Adventure with 2.5 million units sold worldwide. There were about 600 games released for the system. These numbers can seem quite small when compared to its competitors: the PlayStation 2 sold approximately 155 million units (and had 2400+ games); the GameCube sold about 21 million units (and had 650+ games), and the Xbox sold more than 24 millions units (and had 950+ games). The Dreamcast was an early success, but the moment its competitors launched too, it was doomed. Nevertheless, nowadays the Dreamcast is considered as one of the best (and most underrated) systems of its generation, or even of all time. It had a developer-friendly SDK, lots of fun arcade-style games, four controller ports for offline multiplayer (a feature popularised by Nintendo that even the PlayStation 2 didn't include), standard modem for online multiplayer and innovative features such as the Visual Memory Unit (needed to save games, but also works as a standalone portable system, like a simpler Game Boy). If there's a major reason why the Dreamcast is so highly regarded, it's due to its strong software catalogue. It had two main Sonic games: Sonic Adventure, the mascot's first adventure in 3D, and Sonic Adventure 2, a sequel that improved everything from its predecessor, but that's only the tip of the iceberg. Great arcade conversions and new interesting games were flowing to Dreamcast owners every month, with such classics and cult titles as Virtual-On Oratorio Tangram (1999), D2 (1999), Chu Chu Rocket (1999), Armada (1999), Bangai-O (1999), Seaman (1999), Maken X (1999), Ready 2 Rumble (1999), Space Channel 5 (1999), Virtua Striker 2 (2000), Resident Evil Code: Veronica (2000), Marvel vs. Capcom 2 (2000), MDK2 (2000), Omikron: The Nomad Soul (2000), Cannon Spike (2000), Capcom vs. SNK (2000), Jet Set Radio (2000), Skies of Arcadia (2000), Daytona USA (2000), Dead or Alive 2 (2000), Giant Gram (2000), Lack of Love (2000), Samba de Amigo (2000), Ecco the Dolphin (2000), Virtua Tennis (2000), Cool Cool Toon (2000), Crazy Taxi (2000), Fur Fighters (2000), Grandia 2 (2000), Illbleed (2001), Cosmic Smash (2001), Confidential Mission (2001), Fighting Vipers 2 (2001), Headhunter (2001), Heavy Metal: Geomatrix (2001), Outtrigger (2001), REZ (2001), Ikaruga (2002) and Border Down (2003). Popular games that took advantage of Dreamcast's online play included Phantasy Star Online (2000), Quake III Arena (2000), Alien Front Online (2001) and Bomberman Online (2001). One of the most ambitious games released for the Dreamcast was Yu Suzuki's dream project Shenmue (published in December 1999 after being canned on the Saturn). The game had a realistic city to explore, simulated night/day cycle, dozens of non-playable characters with individual routines, many detailed objects that could be picked up and analyzed or used by the player, incredible graphics for its time and memorable music. It was one of the most innovative games of the early 2000s... but also one of the most expensive ever and it didn't manage to make any profit for Sega, adding more economic losses to the company. Even with such a list of great games and a lot of love from its owners, the Dreamcast was not able to make enough

money. While indie developers continue to make Dreamcast games to this day, major gaming studios at the time had to kill many projects when they realized that the market was not profitable and Sega was bailing out. There are some popular PC franchises such as Half Life, Messiah and System Shock 2 that were planned for the Dreamcast and later cancelled, or titles started on the Dreamcast that were then published for different consoles, such as GunValkyrie and ToeJam & Earl III. Many other obscure Dreamcast games were never released in any way and were soon forgotten: in the following pages we'll take a look at some of the most interesting titles that we could have played on the last Sega console.

DREAMCAST
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AGARTHA

Article by: Carlos Nieto

Agartha, a legendary rumored city said to be located at the earth's core, was also the name of a cancelled survival horror adventure planned for the Dreamcast. It began development in 2000 by French team No Cliché, promising an intriguing story and inventive gameplay. No Cliché opened their doors in the late 90s, lead by Frédérick Raynal (of Little Big Adventure fame) and were then bought by Sega to create exclusive games for their Dreamcast. Together they released such beloved titles as Toy Commander and Toy Racer, both of which earnt positive reactions from critics. Agartha would have been their most ambitious and complex game to date. From the small amount of info released to promote the project, it seems that the team had some interesting ideas to explore: "In the Winter of 1929, a Romanian village is partially destroyed due to an earthquake. Below, a subterranean city called Agartha exists as a prison where evil is being kept away and waits for an opportunity to escape. As a protagonist named Kirk, you'll face challenges such as demons and monsters, but also have to take moral decisions and choose whether to save the innocents or trigger the arrival of chaos on earth." Agartha would probably follow closely in the footsteps of titles such as Alone in the Dark and Silent Hill, with a more psychological take than the usual jump-scares. Gameplay would encompass exploration, solving puzzles and surviving enemy encounters in the best way possible. The morality system would also affect players progress through game and as well as the story itself. Depending on your choices, such as saving or letting people die, the ending would differ. Like in No Clichè's previous works, the graphics also pushed the limits of the hardware and were quite impressive for their time. The only video available released shows a great looking environment in a snowy mountain, while in one particular scene, we can see a watermill with a flowing river that displayed their streaming technology, developed to handle heavy real-time events such as avalanches. To create a realistic village and to get the architecture right, the art team traveled to Romania and went across the country to take inspiration for their project. Unfortunately the Dreamcast was discontinued in 2001 and Sega decided to pull the plug on No Cliché: after trying to survive by developing a PC port of Toy Commander, the team had to close down due to a lack of funds. Agartha would have been an amazing entry to the Dreamcast's library and could have been a cult hit for enthusiasts of the horror adventure genre: like most of the unreleased games covered by Unseen64, it's a real shame that No Clichè was not able to fulfill their vision.

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CASTLEVANIA RESURRECTION

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Castlevania Resurrection is a cancelled action game that was in development at Konami of America in 1999 for Dreamcast. The story of the game was a pretty standard fare: in 1666 the Dark Countess brings back the evil Count Dracula to our world. To counter him the forces of good decide to summon, from the past, Sonia Belmont who was the former star of Castlevania Legends (GameBoy). They also summon, from the future, Victor Belmont who was a gambler and nineteenth century descendant of the noble family who did not want to become a vampire hunter, but nonetheless finds himself unwillingly teleported to 1666 to fight against Dracula. A few magazines and websites have been able to test a couple of early builds of the game, preserving some valuable details about this project. First of all, Castlevania Resurrection was supposed to be more linear and focused on action compared to the freshly released Symphony of the Night and Castlevania 64. Other than strengthening the normal attack of the whip with power-ups found inside candles, or using classic Castlevania secondary weapons (axes, daggers, holy water, boomerangs, each of which had its own special move), the two characters could also avoid enemies by doing a diving roll or a backflip. Players could choose between three types of camera: a behind-the-character view, an auto-seek mode that locked on to enemies and a free-positioning camera. For an action game Resurrection was apparently quite long featuring five worlds divided into roughly ten subsections each, among which there were outdoor stages set in the woods and in a creek, a cathedral interior, an on-rail Hydra chase level in a corridor filled by lava, a kitchen and an armoury. In an interview Greg Orduyan, Resurrection's lead artist, discussed a stage that existed only on paper, saying "we thought of a level where it is black and white, monochromatic, like the old Dracula 30s movie, with film grains and everything". We also know that Konami of America wanted to include about forty different types of enemies. Looking at the screenshots, it

seems that all the usual suspects (medusas, harpies, axe lords, skeletons, ghosts, dark mages, wolf men, zombies, bats, and mummies) were in the game. Ultimately Resurrection was postponed twice, first in June 1999 and then in December of the same year. In March 2000, Konami announced that Castlevania Dreamcast was cancelled. We do not know exactly why the project was shelved, but Greg Orduyan said that the sudden announcement of the PS2 "did not affect just Castlevania, it affected every single Dreamcast game Konami was developing worldwide". "The game's assets", continues Orduyan, "were eventually sent back to Japan so they could look to it for reference in future 3D Castlevania." According to a Club Nintendo article, Konami wasn't too impressed with the game's progress and consequently passed off Resurrection's current build to its Kobe Studio (a development team that worked on many past Castlevania titles) which apparently decided to just scrape it altogether. In 1998, Konami of America developed another game that was eventually cancelled, an action title for Nintendo 64 named Survivor: Day One. Konami rebooted the Castlevania franchise in 2010 with the launch of Castlevania: Lords of Shadow for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC.

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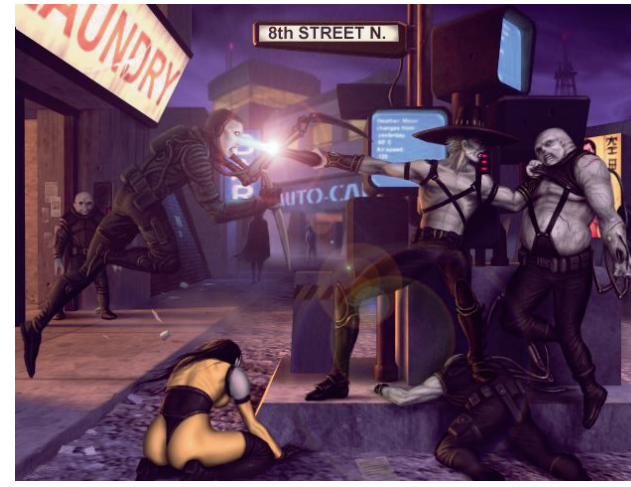
CHAKAN

Article by: Tristan Avery

Chakan: The Forever Man is a game that was released in 1992 for the Sega Genesis / Mega Drive. The game was developed by Extended Play Productions and was based off of a short comic book series by Robert A Kraus. The plot featured a deadly swordsman named Chakan who, in his hubris, stated that not even Death itself could defeat him in combat. Death accepts his challenge and offers a wager, if Chakan wins he gains immortality, but if he loses he becomes Death's servant for eternity. Chakan accepts the wager and defeats Death in combat, but his immortality comes at a price. He finds himself wandering the earth for thousands of years yearning for the embrace of death, yet the only way he can break his curse of immortality is to destroy all supernatural evil that exists. The game was a 2D side scrolling action / platformer that had the player traversing nightmarish landscapes and battling a variety of monsters and demons. In addition to Chakan's signature dual blades, there were a variety of other collectable weapons to do battle with, as well as magical upgrades that could be added to weapons that were gained from mixing potions. The game is notorious for being punishingly difficult with its overpowered enemies, constant platform jumping, timed

levels, and lack of directions on how to properly utilize some aspects of the game. This aspect, along with the tone and visual design, gives the game many similarities to the popular Dark Souls series. While Dark Souls has definitely seen much more success, Chakan has gained a cult following over the years. In 1998, a 3D sequel to the game began development for the Dreamcast, and potentially other systems, by AndNow studios. The studio was founded by Ed Annunziata, who had worked on the original Chakan as well as other prolific Genesis games such as the Ecco the Dolphin series and Vectorman. The game would follow Chakan as he traveled down the river Styx to confront his final opponent, and on the way he would reminisce about his greatest victories over the years. These memories would serve as levels, 12 planned in all, and would allow the player to play as Chakan in a wide array of environments ranging from gothic hellscapes, as seen in the original game, to futuristic cyberpunk cities. Along with this, Chakan would do combat with a variety of enemies and would utilize several weapons including his signature swords and laser weaponry. The potion mixing upgrade system would also make a return, this time with up to 65,000 possible combinations. As seems to be a trend in cancelled video games, early reports made it seem as if the game would be very advanced for its time. Once again lending to the idea of Chakan as a proto Dark Souls, Annunziata had this to say in a 1999 interview with IGN, "You've got the games you can pick up and immediately start playing. Then come the games you play for about an hour, and you finally start getting the hang of them. Then...then you've got the games you play all the way through and you still don't feel like you've done it all. That's the type of game we want to create". The team wanted to shy away from the hack n' slash roots of its predecessor and move towards a more cerebral style of gameplay. The primary way this would be accomplished is through the boss fights, which Annunziata stated would be like levels within themselves. They all would have advanced AI and have their own unique personalities, attack strategies, strengths, and weaknesses. Not unlike the more recent Hitman games, the player would have to keep a keen eye open to discover the variety of options at their disposal to overcome these unique encounters. This could be accomplished in several ways, such as the ability to fully rotate the camera during cutscenes to reveal crucial details such as hidden pathways or signature markings of your enemy that indicate when they are nearby. Chakan would also turn his head and look at important aspects of the environment, such as hidden ledges, to indicate that they might be of help. One example given was a planned boss who had superior hearing, and would eviscerate the player in a head on confrontation. Instead, the player would have to sneak up and attack without being heard. Annunziata gave several examples of how this could be accomplished, one of which would be to time your movements to the lighting strikes of a passing thunderstorm as to drown out the sounds of your footsteps. Other options included walking through mud to muffle your footsteps and jumping across high ledges that were out of earshot of the enemy. In late 2000, after a few months of silence from the studio, AndNow announced that they were encountering unforeseen problems with the project, but assured fans that they would never give up on the game. This claim was still held by Annunziata in a May 2001 interview where he stated that the team wanted to make sure the game was up to the standards they set, and

that fans would just need to be patient. To this date, neither the "unforeseen problems" nor the official reason for the cancellation of the game was ever given. The only physical evidence of the game that exists is a brief tech demo of Chakan wielding his swords, a few pieces of concept art of Chakan and some possible enemies in the game. While AndNow wouldn't go on to make Chakan or any other games on the Dreamcast, members of the team would move on to other projects. Ed Annunziata would find success in the mobile game field as the Senior Manager of Product Development for the Nokia N-Gage and most recently as the President and CEO of mobile game developer Playchemy. Ben Lincoln of lostworlds.net discovered that Steve Ross, lead artist for Blood Omen 2 who had also worked on Chakan, used many of the leftover concept art ideas in Chakan for Blood Omen. Among these are the almost identical appearance of Chakan and the protagonist of Blood Omen, Kain, as well as many similar enemy models, similar environments, and even a distinct "broken ankh" symbol that can been seen in both. Even if the project never materialized into the hardcore action adventure promised for the Dreamcast, we can still hope that one day Chakan could be resurrected, with fans of Souls-like titles ready to play and overcome a similarly difficult and epic game.



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GEIST FORCE

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Geist Force is a cancelled shooter for Sega's last console, the Dreamcast. It was one of the first games to be announced for the system, and it's said to be the first Dreamcast game to ever be in development. It was set in the future, on a distant planet, in which civil war had broken out and a super weapon had been discovered, which could destroy entire planets. The player's task was to stop the utilisation of said weapon. As we can read at the Sega Retro website: "The game was first shown at E3 1998, and again at the 1998 Tokyo Game Show, where it was announced that it was 80% complete. These two versions were quite different from each other; many fans have speculated that the E3 version was entirely pre-rendered and used less than 30% of the Dreamcast's power." Geist Force was developed by a mysterious American Sega team named Rabbit Punch, of which there is no available information and it seems to have vanished with the cancellation of their first Dreamcast shmup. The game featured computer-generated cut-scenes made by Netter Digital Entertainment (NDEI), a company most known for creating CGI special effects in the final two seasons of Babylon 5 and for the Robotech 3000 TV

series. Geist Force was originally intended to be released in December 1998 in Japan, but it couldn't be finished in time. This resulted in it being rescheduled as an American launch title to be released on September 9th, 1999. Gameplay was pretty standard; it felt like a Panzer Dragoon game set in a science-fiction world instead of a traditional fantasy world. It was also inspired by the classic Star Fox for the SNES and its sequel, Star Fox 64, for the Nintendo 64. Controls were standard too. Players pressed "A" to shoot a laser, "B" for a multiple missile burst, "X" for a short speed boost, tapped "X" 4 times for a barrel roll, "Y" for an air break, "A" and "X" together to drop a smart bomb, "L" to bank left, "R" to bank right, "L" and "R" together to move the ship up, and "L", "R" and "Start" to pause. The control stick moved the ship around, and the D-pad was used to shoot a special missile burst. Rumors says that Geist Force was cancelled in 1999 due to interventions by Bernie Stolar (CEO for Sega of America at the time). According to him, the title wasn't good enough to be a launch title for the console. Nevertheless, there are other stories that say otherwise. Some sources say the game wasn't released because Sega Japan were not "impressed" with the game, and considering that Sega's US and Japan branches were constantly in disagreement, this isn't hard to believe. But the story doesn't end there. Geist Force is one of the few cancelled games to ever be released unofficially years after it was announced (and even after the console for which it was developed was discontinued). Geist Force was released in downloadable form (as an ISO) in 2012, thirteen years after it was supposed to be available, thanks to the combined efforts of the modding community. The awesome community of prototype collectors at the AssemblerGames forum were able to find a playable, almost fully completed version of Geist Force thanks to an ex-Sega employee. This lead to them running a fundraiser to ensure that the game would be preserved. Thankfully, the effort was successful, and the community released a special, professional-looking reproduction copy of the title only for those who donated to the fundraising campaign. Afterwards, they completed their "plan" by publicly releasing the ISO file so that anyone could download the game free of charge. Geist Force is one of the rare cancelled games that, thanks to its fans, didn't end up getting "lost", and that has found new life thanks to a significant group of Dreamcast fans. The fan release isn't perfect - apparently, it's prone to crashing (even causing the console to automatically reboot), but considering that gamers had thought for more than a decade that the title would remain unplayable forever, we should definitely be thankful for its unveiling.

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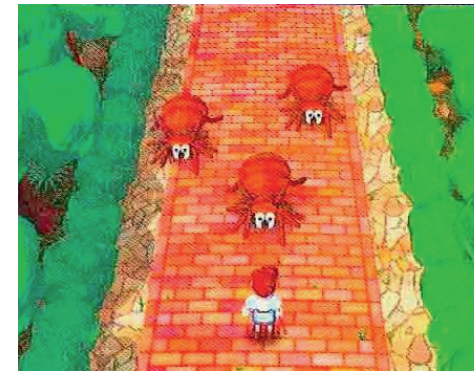
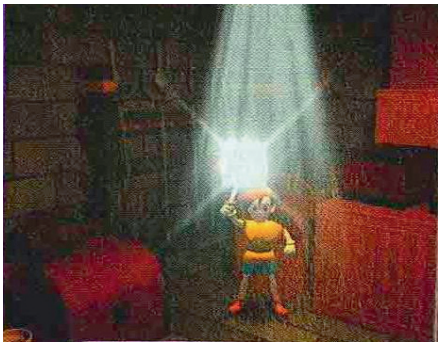
LITTLE DREAM

Article by: James Alan Griffiths



When Lewis Carroll wrote Alice's Adventures in Wonderland way back in 1865, he probably didn't envisage the advent of video games overtaking literature as a form of entertainment in the early '90s. So we can't really know what he'd think of Little Dream, a cancelled RPG by Panther Software, destined for the Sega's Dreamcast in 1999, later delayed to 2000. I like to think he'd feel flattered that the game was likely inspired by the fantasy world he created. The few screens of the game that do exist - sourced from a couple of previews in French and Japanese gaming magazines - show a game world that bears more than a passing resemblance to the fantasy world Carol created, with an equally wacky cast of characters. We witness an encounter with a pig king and his bodyguard cops, brick roads in forest blocked by spiders and dark rooms lit by torchlight. No doubt there was a degree of exploration required, and potential treasures to be found. In addition to the possible Alice in Wonderland inspiration, the game could have taken a nod or two from children's nursery rhymes and Disney animation. The character models are reminiscent of similar games of the era - renders have a shiny, Playmobil look to them. The protagonist is clearly a child (perhaps the game was his "little dream") wearing braces and shorts. In one of the screens it looks like he's happily skipping down a corridor. Official copies of the time describes the playable character as "[a] Pinocchio-like doll [called] Marionet Charlie". It is unknown whether this 3D RPG was to be a traditional turn-based affair, but it's safe to say it probably was, if similar games from around the same time are anything to go by. Apart from what we see in the images and from the magazine previews, very little additional information is known about Little Dream. It's safe to assume that the screens shown of the game look like target renders, rather than actual graphics produced by the Dreamcast. This might mean the title was canned quite early in the development process. Developers Panther Software launched another Dreamcast title, a sequel to a 1995 Space Griffon game for Playstation. However, this was received with poor reviews. Although according to their Wikipedia page the developer still exists, their last listed game is from 2004. "Kana: Little Sister" is an interactive novel inspired by the world of dating, for PC. Formerly known as Panther Studios Ltd, they revised their name in 1991: prior to making games for Xbox, Playstation and Dreamcast, they developed titles for forgotten Japanese formats like the MSX and Sharp X6800. It seems they specialised in making interactive novels; "Hana no Kiyosato: Pension Story", released in 1989 for MSX being an interesting early example of the genre. Later on they would be one of the few Japanese developers to invest in Microsoft's Xbox, creating futuristic mech based



role-player “Metal Dungeon” in 2002. However the game was also poorly received and has since become a cult classic for all the wrong reasons! Other than that, very little information about Panther Software is available. It seems like several of the games they’ve developed and published in the west have been bashed by critics and sold poorly. One can only hope that had Little Dream actually released, it would’ve been a well received RPG on a console that typically isn’t know for many classics of that genre (Skies of Arcadia aside!). Sadly we’ll never know - the game was clearly bigger than the sum of its parts: the dream would never become reality.

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PROPELLER ARENA

Article by: Matt Soulia

Of all the titles slated for release on the ill-fated Dreamcast, Propeller Arena: Aviation Battle Championship was slated to be one of the most ambitious titles to date. Helmed by Shenmue creator Yu Suzuki, Propeller Arena was going to be an online shooter similar to Quake, except with airplanes. Players would take on the role of one of eight characters, playing in different game modes like Deathmatch, and would have been one of the very first console games to feature voice communication between online players. For those that were looking for a single player experience, there would be the option of going into the single player Championship Mode (which was a quick series of dogfights), and Training Arena for those wanting to hone their skills. Completing these single player modes through the eight default stages would unlock additional characters and stages. And finally, for those that were looking for a traditional multiplayer experience, there was Quick Battle, which would allow you to blast your friends from the comfort of your couch. Another feature in the game, which was not in many games at the time, was a licensed soundtrack that featured popular punk-rock bands of the time (such as No Use for a Name and Rise Against) alongside the game's own stellar soundtrack. Propeller Arena: Aviation Battle Championship (Originally titled Propeller Head Online), was first on display at E3 on May 19, 2001, and was trademarked on August 14, 2001 with a planned release in September of that year. As many people know, however, September 2001 was when terrorist attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, effecting the lives of many and even taking a tole on various forms of media around that time. Propeller Arena was one of them. On September 13, 2001, Sega Corporation released the following statement: "Sega Corporation was greatly saddened to learn of the terrorist attacks on the United States on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. Our deepest condolences go out to the families and friends of those injured or

who lost their lives in the horrific events. At this time, we have decided to postpone shipment of 'Propeller Arena' for Dreamcast. Although the game content does not deal with terrorism in any way, it is possible for a determined individual to deliberately play the game in a manner that generates images similar to those we have seen on the news. We want to avoid causing any additional grief to those involved in this week's tragedy and feel this is an appropriate action. Again, our hearts go out to those affected by Tuesday's tragic events." This statement is thought to be, in part, because of one particular stage titled "Tower City." This stage was filled with huge skyscrapers that bear a striking resemblance to New York City, including towers similar in appearance to the empire state building and the twin towers. Sega of America officially canceled the project a month later in October of 2001. However, this is far from the end of the story of Propeller Arena. At some point in the mid 2000s, an ISO of the game was leaked online. According to a post on the Assemblergames.com Forum, an user named "Servicegames" obtained a hard copy of Propeller Arena and was taking donations to distribute the game to the public. Unable to rip the game himself, he handed off his copy of the game to another user by the name of Belok, who was able to crack the games code. However, Belok handed off cracked copies of the game to others in his group, one of which leaked the game online before Servicegames got his copy back. As a result, a lot of people who had paid donations to Servicegames for a copy of Propeller Arena were reasonably upset, especially when Servicegames and said donations seemed to disappear. Dating back to 2003, before the game was leaked online, it appears that a copy of Propeller Arena appeared on Ebay. According to a post on digitpress.com, a group of posters were going to pool funds and buy this hard copy. We don't know if they reached their goal, but it could be that this is the same one that Servicegames managed to get, and is also the earliest record of anybody finding the game post-cancellation. Even if you don't own a Dreamcast and cannot play the leaked copy of Propeller Arena, Youtube has a multitude of gameplay videos and reviews that those who are interested in seeing the game are able to watch. Thanks to these videos, we can see how the game was basically finished and could have been put to market before its cancellation. It even has the full licensed soundtrack and every training mission and scenario ready to play. While it's unknown if Propeller Arena was ever going to see a release later on on a different console, thanks to the power of the internet and some very dedicated fans, Propeller Arena will never be forgotten. Despite the fact that the game was never officially released, what is available is an awesome game that could have easily been a hit for the Dreamcast if it ever were to be released. One way or another, the legend of Propeller Arena will forever go down in history in the hearts of Sega fans.

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RINGMAN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Ringman is a cancelled third person platform-shooter that was in development by Zono Inc in late 1996. It would have been one of the first games ever published by Sega of America for their lost version of the Dreamcast. The team behind this project was part of the same one that worked along with Ed Annunziata on Mr. Bones for the Sega Saturn, with names such as William Novak, Simon Hallam and Dave Castelnuovo: thanks to the good relationship between Sega and Zono, they were able to pitch this project for the planned 128 bit console. While the Dreamcast hardware was still not available in late 1996, Zono interfaced directly with Sega of America producers and the development team that was designing a 3Dfx version of the console, codenamed “Blackbelt”. Sega of America wanted to create something amazing and showed off the planned graphical power of the new 3Dfx chips. The game concept was inspired by the (at the time) newly released Quake by ID Software and Dave remembered how John Carmack was talking about implementing NURBS ("Non-uniform rational Basis spline" a model used in computer graphics for generating and representing curves) in his next rendering engine: Sega producers wanted Zono to take a look at using NURBS to create this Blackbelt game. The surfaces in each world of Ringman would be curved and even the main character would have had a body composed of different rings, like a colorful spring that would permit it to move around quickly and shoot down enemies. The team did quite a bit of concepting for the game and got as far as having a very simple prototype world with the protagonist moving around, but unfortunately the project was canned in mid-1997 when Sega of Japan found out about Sega of America’s plan to create another console and shut down the project. As we can read in an article by Douglass C. Perry on Gamasutra: “In 1996, 3Dfx began building wide acclaim for its powerful graphics chips, one of which ran in arcade machines, including Atari's San Francisco Rush and Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey. In 1997, 3Dfx went public, announcing its IPO. In the process it revealed the details of its contract with Sega, required by U.S. law. The announcement, however, had undesired effects. It publicly revealed Sega's blueprint for a new, unannounced console, and angered executives at Sega Japan. Numerous reports indicate Yamamoto's Blackbelt chipset using the 3Dfx chips was the more powerful of the two. Sega executives, however, still fuming at 3Dfx, severed their contract with the chip maker. (Soon thereafter, 3Dfx sued Sega and both companies settled out of court.) In the end, Sega of Japan selected Sato's design, codenamed it "Katana," and announced it publicly on September 7, 1997.” If this internal issue between the “two Segas” was not enough, Sega of America was also split into the ill-fated SegaSoft and in early 1997, a few of their projects were canned. In late 1996, the CEO and CFO of SegaSoft asked the new company director, Peter Brown, to install a new financial system by April 1997. As told by Brown during an interview with InfoWorld magazine, "as a young company, we needed built-in maturity of process and scalability": we can assume that games for a not-yet-confirmed new console were not a safe bet for the company stability. After the cancellation of Ringman, along with their N64 legendary project “Freak Boy”, Zono had to wait untill 2000 to release another game: Metal Fatigue, a PC RTS published by Psygnosis. In 1997, SegaSoft still released a couple of Saturn games, Scud: The Disposable Assassin and Three Dirty Dwarves.

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STREETS OF RAGE 4

Article by: Karl Gutierrez

Created to be the direct successor to the Streets of Rage series of beat 'em up, Streets of Rage 4 was originally planned for the Sega Saturn. Sega of America decided to purchase the rights to a 3D beat 'em up that was about half complete, called Judgment Force, designed by Core Design (you know, the team that created Tomb Raider). What could have gone wrong? The idea was to take Judgment Force and rework it into "Streets of Rage 3D". Unfortunately towards the end of development, Sega was unhappy with the results and withdrew from the project. Core Design kept working on Judgment Force to finally release it for the Playstation, Nintendo 64, and PC as Fighting Force on October 1997, welcomed by the press and gamers with mixed reviews. A few years later Sega enlisted Overworks (mostly known in the west as the team behind Skies of Arcadia and the Sakura Taisen series) to begin a new concept of Streets of Rage 4 for the new 128-bit Sega Dreamcast. A very early 3d mockup video of the game was shown off to conceptualize their idea of the new game. It would include full 3d graphics, as well as a first person mode and a few tag team combos for the planned online coop mode. This demo shows a playable character which we can only assume is Axle (one of the classic protagonist of Streets of Rage), based on the rendition. Executives at Sega of America, however, were not so eager about the project. They were aware that side scrolling beat-em-ups were a dying genre in gaming. With the failed attempt to revive the genre with Fighting Force on the Saturn, Sega of America decided to shut the idea down for the Dreamcast too. They did not want to invest money in a game that was not going to succeed financially. Unfortunately, not much else is known about this game's character or story, as it never made it past the concept demo. The Dreamcast was loved by gamers for its library full of fun arcade games and an online version of Streets of Rage 4 would have probably have made many fans happy. Unfortunately Sega's decision made sense at the time as they were already in a difficult situation that soon lead to the failure of their last console. Sega did attempt to resurrect the Streets of Rage franchise in the following years for other consoles, with reboots of the series and remakes, but unfortunately none of them were ever released.

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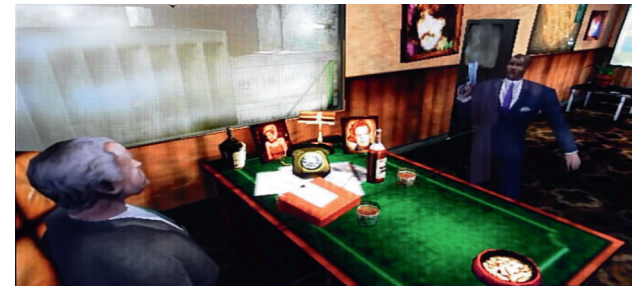
TAKE THE BULLET

Article by: Jade Avis



Take the Bullet was an ambitious mission based shooter in the vein of such classics as the Nintendo 64's Goldeneye 007. Developed by Red Lemon Studios and planned to be released on the SEGA Dreamcast, Take The Bullet's most interesting feature was its planned support for the Dreamcast's Light Gun, that would allow the player to aim freely on the screen while moving with the standard controller. The game was set in 1960's America and followed Jack Travis, a bodyguard hired by a presidential candidate known as Kincaide, who is being harassed by a gang

of thugs called The Children of Gabriel. Players would have to navigate through the environment in either first or third person mode and work with an AI controlled bodyguard team to make sure Kincaide is safe. The developers concentrated on getting as many onscreen characters as they could to create crowds, allowing for mechanics wherein players would have to avoid accidently killing any civilians, or risk a Game Over. Twelve levels were planned, featuring 18 possible weapons to be used, including a pistol, machine gun and a sniper rifle. The game would also support up to 16 players in an online multiplayer mode. As mentioned previously, Take the Bullet was could use the Dreamcast Light Gun for free aiming. Meanwhile, the Dreamcast controller's D-Pad would also allow the player to give commands to Kincaide when he was following Travis, such as "stay here" and "crouch" orders. SEGA and Red Lemon Studios had faith in the project, putting their resources and hopes into it, as they really wanted to create something that would have rivaled Goldeneye 007 and Perfect Dark, becoming a new standard for console first person shooters. With an interesting single player mode composed of many different missions, as well as a potentially fun online multiplayer, it could have been a must have for Dreamcast owners. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned. The game was due to be released in 1999 for the Christmas holidays, however it was subject to many delays, and ultimately cancelled.It is thought that the cancellation was due to SEGA discontinuing the Dreamcast in 2001. Red Lemon Studios were not able to finish the game before it development ceased, but an incomplete prototype is in the hands of a private collector, so maybe in the future it might be shared online with the community. Red Lemon Studios was a gaming studio formed in Scotland in 1996 by 3 ex-Gremlin Interactive employees – Andy Campbell, Laurent Noel and Andy Findlay. When they relocated in 1998 to Glasgow, they also joined forced with the SEGA Europe team and began production on games for the Dreamcast. In their lifespan, they released five games: Aironauts (1999), a game based on Mel Gibson's Braveheart (1999), Roswell Conspiracies: Aliens, Myths and other Legends (2001), Dexter's Laboratory: Mandark's Lab (2002) and Farscape: the Game (2003). Noel sold his share of the company in 2000, but they hired Peter Bilotta (President of Virgin Interactive Entertainment) and Stuart Cosgrove (Head of Programmes for the UK television network Channel 4). Despite these recruitments, Red Lemon Studios went bankrupt in early 2003. Andy Campbell's most recent work was for Halo: The Master Chief Collection, released in 2014, while Laurent Noel is currently a senior lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire in the subject of Game Development, while Andy Findlay was one the Senior Development Directors for Battlefield Hardline, released in 2015. Peter Bilotta is currently the President and Chief Operating Officer of IGA Worldwide Inc. (an in-game advertising company). Stuart Cosgrove left Channel 4 in 2015 to pursue other projects.

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THUNDER FORCE VI

Article by: Nicolas Dunai

Released in 2008 for the Sony Playstation 2 exclusively for Japan, Thunder Force VI is the final game in Technosoft's long running series of classic shoot 'em up titles. It was developed by Sega and the project was lead by Kagasei Shimomura, who worked on such fan favorites as Vanquish, Bayonetta and many Sega Ages ports. However, this was the second attempt at sixth Thunder Force title, the first of which was from Technosoft themselves and for the Sega Dreamcast. Technosoft's attempt at making Thunderforce VI unfortunately did not make much progress and the only footage in existence is concept footage for an introduction cutscene. The cutscene was directed by Motohiko Komaba (a Technosoft employee as far as we know) and was dated October 16th, 2000: a year before Technosoft's closure. Music for the game did manage to get released in 2001 on a CD named Broken Thunder: Noise Image Soundtracks 3, which also had arrangements of previous Thunder Force music. Disappointingly however, none of this music found in Broken Thunder was used for the PS2 release, instead the game had music by veteran composers of the shooter genre, such as Go Sato, Motoaki Furukawa and Tomayo Kawamoto, of Raiden, Gradius, and Rayforce fame respectively. In 2007, a doujin studio named Noise Factory released a fan shmup which also had the title Broken Thunder, using music from the aforementioned soundtrack. The game was produced by Thunderforce composer Hyakutaru Tsukumo, the studio's lead. Sadly, the game is notably unpolished and unfinished, being a generally poor title outside of it's soundtrack. Could some of the Dreamcast assets have been used to create such fan game? We may never find out for certain. While it is also unknown as to an exact reason why the Dreamcast version of Thunderforce VI was cancelled, project leads point to the acquisition and subsequent closure of Technosoft by Pachinko maker Twenty-one Company in 2001. Technosoft had also been losing staff as early as 1985 with Thunder Force creator Katsunori Yoshimura leaving to form Arsys Software, which later was known as Cyberhead. Arsys is most well known for developing Air Combat, the first title in the Ace Combat series as well as the first Gran Turismo. Unfortunately, the studio was also shut down in 2001 when the studio was reduced to all but three employees. Maybe the best known company to be formed from ex-Technosoft employees would be Ganbarion, founded in 1999, who gained a following for their games based off of manga from the publication Weekly Shonen Jump, the most notable game being Jump Ultimate Stars. As of 2015, the studio still operates with their latest game being One Piece: Unlimited World Red.

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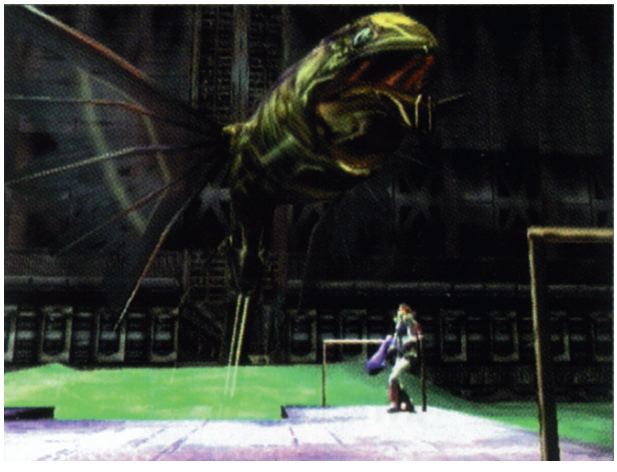
TYPE X SPIRAL NIGHTMARE

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Type X: Spiral Nightmare was a Dreamcast survival horror described as "Emotional Horror Adventure", developed by (as far as we know) an internal Sega team in 2000. The Dreamcast already had a great variety of



survival horror games (Resident Evil: Code Veronica, Blue Stinger, Illbleed, Carrier, D2) and Type X would have been a nice addition to the list, if only it could have been released. The story started in the year 2078 when the three main characters (Yohann Goodman, Jessica Streep and Rod Steel) were sent to repair a broken turbine on a space colony orbiting around Mars. However, they soon discover that mysterious creatures invaded the colony. Consequently, the trio decides to escape to Mars, unsuspecting that on the planet's surface a new terror awaits them. The plot was apparently nothing to write home about, but due to the so-called "Emotional Communication System", the events of the story, the ending and the explorable areas, changed sensibly depending on how well players handled their relationships with each of the twenty NPCs. If they somehow managed to hurt their feelings, things could apparently go wrong very fast and the game would have continued in different ways, adding more replay value. The enemies' AI was also specifically programmed to react accordingly to the player's behaviour, creating unexpected situations and more interesting fights. Speaking about the gameplay, Type-X was a classic survival horror / third-person shooter in which (like in Dead Space) the player could hit and cut off some parts of the aliens' bodies. However, if they remained alive, monsters could pick-up their parts and throw them. Interestingly, by collecting and mixing DNA samples left by dead enemies, players would be able to create different ammo types with special effects such as explosion, meltdown, freeze and lightning. Most of the 3D environments could also be partially or completely destroyed. From the early previews published in Japanese magazines at the time, Type X: Spiral Nightmare sounded like a more fast-paced, arcadey version of Resident Evil or Blue Stinger, offering a different style to the genre. The game was planned to be released in 2000, but it was quietly cancelled shortly thereafter, probably because the Dreamcast was almost commercially dead. There is no other info available on the project, only a few screenshots that show its great graphics (for a Dreamcast game) and some concept art of the main characters. We hope that someday a playable version could leak online or at least that someone could find a video of Type X, to see better what we lost with its cancellation and understand how it would have been played.

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Game Boy Advance

Article by: Tristan Avery, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The Game Boy would continue to evolve in the years that followed its original release with new iterations such as the Game Boy Pocket in 1996 and the Game Boy Color in 1998, but the real deal was the Game Boy Advance (GBA). This was released in March of 2001 in Japan and June of 2001 in North America, Europe and Australia. Since 1996, gaming magazines published numerous rumors about a new, more advanced Game Boy system codenamed "Project Atlantis". This would have featured colorful SNES-like graphics, but that project never saw the light of day along with other portable console prototypes that Nintendo tested during the years. Only in August 2000 did Nintendo officially announce their Game Boy follow-up at the Tokyo Game Show, during the same conference in which they also unveiled the Nintendo GameCube. Designed by Satoro Okada, the Game Boy Advance featured a "landscape" oriented screen that differentiated itself from previous versions and boasted even more impressive technical specifications with its 32 bit RISC processor. It was being marketed as a "32 bit" system just like the original Playstation and Sega Saturn. However, apart from some incredible 3D tech demos, the average GBA game looked like Super Nintendo games and that was enough to make it another huge success. The Advance series would go on to sell over 80 million units worldwide with the help of an impressive 2001 launch and the following month's line-up including Mario Kart Super Circuit, Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon, Golden Sun, Advance Wars, Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis and Mega Man Battle Network. It could have been difficult to keep up with such a great series of titles, but somehow Nintendo and their third parties were able to release new popular games each following year, such as Metroid Fusion (2002), Mega Man Zero (2002), Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance (2002), Kirby: Nightmare in Dream Land (2002), Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town (2003), Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga (2003), Sword of Mana (2003), Final Fantasy Tactics Advance (2003), Fire Emblem (2003), Pokemon Ruby and Sapphire (2003), WarioWare (2003), Mario vs. Donkey Kong (2004), Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow (2004), Mario Golf (2004), Legend of Zelda: Minish Cap (2005), Mario Tennis (2005), WarioWare Twisted (2005) and the cult-following Mother 3 (2006). A good part of the successful GBA catalogue is also composed by remakes of 16-bit classic games such as Final Fantasy I, II, IV, V and VI, Tales of Phantasia, Breath of Fire I & II, Super Mario Bros / World, and Zelda: A Link to the Past (with a new 4 Swords co-op mode added). There were also plenty of hidden gems and hardcore hits, with less known but awesome titles like Car Battler Joe (2001), Kuru Kuru Kururin (2001), Shining Soul (2002), Densetsu no Stafy (2002), Ninja Five-O (2003), Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hands (2003), Astro Boy: Omega Factor (2003), Iridion II (2003), Gunstar Super Heroes (2005), Drill Dozer (2005), Sigma Star Saga (2005) and Yggdra Union (2006). With a list of such great games the GBA easily became another favorite handled among casual and core gamers, and to help sell even more units Nintendo did not let slip the chance of creating even better versions of the hardware. New iterations of the Advance included the Game Boy Advance SP in 2003 and the Game Boy Micro in 2005. The SP featured a new flip open design, a rechargeable battery, and a built in backlight while the micro was a much smaller version of the Advance. Even as the GBA was still going strong and sales were as good as always, Nintendo perhaps feared the consequences of Sony's entrance in the portable market with their powerful PSP and the new Nintendo DS was soon released in November 2004. As all great things must, the Game Boy series came to an end symbolically in 2008 when Nintendo officially stopped production of the Advance system in North America. While it will without doubt forever leave an impression on the children of the 90's and '00, it also paved the way for handheld gaming as a whole. As a successor to one of the most successful consoles ever, the Game Boy Advance had huge support from development studios and it's almost impossible to know the precise numbers of games ever released for the system. At the same time, it's hard to know how many GBA games were canceled before they were completed or even shown to the public. In the following pages we'll see a few of the lost Advance projects that were not meant to be, but could have been a great addition to its library.

GAME BOY ADVANCE SOUVENIR

BATTLAND

Article by: Conor Hutton

Battland is a top-down strategy game that was being developed for the Game Boy Advance by Hal Laboratory, the popular team behind the Kirby series. The game was announced at Nintendo Space World 2001 for a spring 2002 release, just like Luna Blaze, another lost project from the same studio. From the small amount of the game shown off at Nintendo Space World it seemed like the game's design was similar to the Fire Emblem series, but with a more arcadey combat system. What we do know about the gameplay is that it focused on strategy and planning: pure strength would rarely result in victory since weaker characters could actually defeat stronger ones with the right strategy. Players were actually required to place their units on the field, ideally in a strategic position, before the battle even began. Battland was also planned to have multiplayer for up to four players via link cables. Hal Laboratory sadly cancelled this game in 2002, only a few months after its announcement and Nintendo never released any more details about the project.

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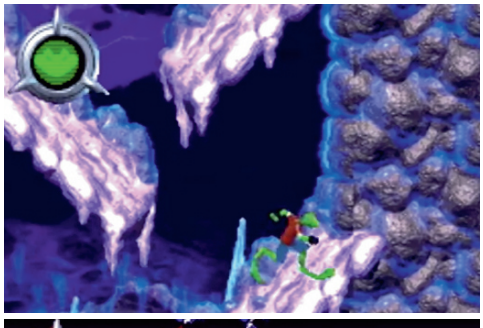
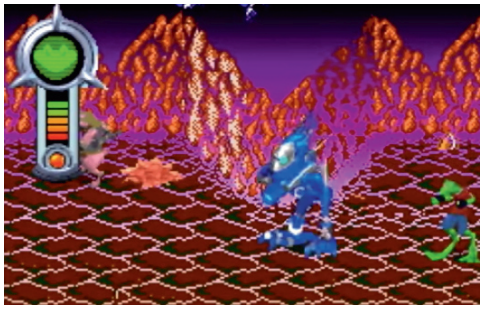
BATTLETOADS





Article by: Conor Hutton

The first Battletoads came out on the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1991 as Rare's attempt to rival the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The game received multiple sequels on the Game Boy, SNES, Genesis/Megadrive and arcade systems, but unfortunately the subject of this article, Battletoads GBA, never came to be. As with the previous Battletoads games, the GBA version was being developed by Rare, a company with dozens of interesting lost games. Apparently there was some initial conflict within the team at Rare over concept art for the GBA game because the same artwork would be used in a potential Xbox version sometime in the future. The team couldn't decide on whether or not to go with a space marine look or something closer to the look of the toads in the original NES game. Eventually a casual look was settled on, although it differed quite a lot from the original Battletoads cartoony art direction. The next bump in the road came when the team couldn't decide whether or not to just remake the original Battletoads with updated graphics or to make something completely new. They decided that the original was quite outdated and such a difficult game that it would be hard to sell, so they agreed to try and preserve what fans liked about the older games while ironing out some of the things that made them frustrating. The team put a rough game together with low detailed sprites and choppy animations, then showed that build of the game to its potential publishers. The publishers were happy with the game so far but wanted some changes made, so they set up a meeting to discuss said changes. That meeting kept getting pushed back until

eventually the team got word that the game was to be cancelled. Then along came November 19, 2011, when RareWareCentral released a prototype ROM of the game that anybody could download and play. There are eight levels in this build of the game and they should grant a little insight into what the game would have been like. Unfortunately, none of the levels are complete, but some are more playable than others. The first level in the ROM is "Ragnarok 0" and this level seemed to feature a barren desert setting with the main enemies being Psycho Pigs, who were also featured in the original NES games. Level number two is "Ice Caverns" which resembled the fourth level in the original NES game. There are no enemies here, you can't get hurt and the level has quite a lot of glitches in the ROM's build. "Test 0" is the third level in the ROM and it's a replica of the first level in the original NES game. Then there is "Trial 0" which seems to be an earlier build of "Ragnarok 0" and only features one enemy, which is a dragon at the beginning. Next is a short level called "Test2D 0" and it only features two Psycho Pig enemies. "Trial 1" was an even shorter level that could only be completed in this early build by debugging. "Trial 2" followed that and was similar to the layout in "Ice Caverns" and it had similar physics, such as allowing the player to slide down slopes. Lastly there is "Test Mode 7" which uses graphics from a different unreleased Rare game called Diddy Kong Pilot. This was clearly meant to be a flying level (although it's unfinished), but interestingly it uses controls that are different from the rest of the levels in the ROM. The Battletoads haven't featured in their own game since 1994, but they do appear as a boss in the Xbox One version of Shovel Knight. Two of the Battletoads games are featured in the Rare Replay collection, and Rash is featured as a playable character in Killer Instinct: Season 3. The head of Xbox, Phil Spencer, has stated his fondness of the original Battletoads and on one occasion even caused a stir when he publicly wore a Battletoads t-shirt, so all in all a Battletoads reboot seems likely sometime in the future. Unfortunately, a complete version of the GBA game will never be finished. But fans can still try out the aforementioned ROM to get a taste for what it might have been like.

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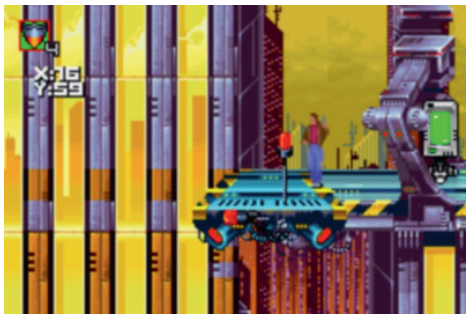
FLASHBACK LEGENDS

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Flashback Legends is an action puzzler that was being co-developed in 2002 for Game Boy Advance by Delphine Software International, a French software house mostly known for Another World and Moto Racer, and its subsidiary Adeline, famous for creating the PC adventure game Little Big Adventure. The original Flashback, released in 1992 for Amiga and then converted for all the major platforms of the time, was one of the first cinematic platformers. Legends was supposed to be the third chapter in the series after Fade to Black, but Delphine was sold in 2003 to Doki Denki and then went bankrupt in 2004 without even announcing the game. Luckily, in 2006, an evaluation version of Flashback Legends, dated 21 June 2002, got leaked on the internet, revealing a title quite far in development: according to an unused loading screen, levels were 70% finished and A.I. was halfway done. A language selection screen was already implemented but only French is available in this build; nevertheless, it's still possible to play the game in English with a fan-made patch. Flashback Legends began with a short cut scene, made of static, comic-like images, that introduced the main plot: agent Conrad, the main character of the series, has to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a federation special military unit sent to



restore order on Planet Titania, which descended into chaos after the appearance of the evil aliens Morphs and the rebellion of some of the natives. As for the gameplay, just like in the first Flashback, in order to beat a stage we had to complete simple tasks such as finding key cards, deactivate traps, restore power to elevators, etc. However, compared to the original Flashback, which was made of interconnected but single screens, Legends was a real side-scroller. Dispose intelligently of the enemies or evade them was likewise essential, because Conrad's basic firepower and resistance were quite low. Our hero could also use a shield to defend himself or a rock to distract opponents. A few more items, like a radar to find key items, grenades, a tele-receiver that generated a shadow clone of Conrad and a force-field that offered protection from impacts, were planned too but, aside from the grenades, that can be used by hacking, not implemented in the prototype. This leaked build includes all the sixteen stages (plus a test one), but only nine are normally accessible, because level 9 doesn't have an exit. By hacking it's still possible to play stages 9-16, but they are even more unfinished than the other levels, and stage 12 strangely plays itself. Cutting Room Floor's article on the game speculates that the final opponent was going to be a new Master Brain, the last boss of the original Flashback. Moreover, every level was planned to have a main objective, like, for example, meeting a NPC, disarming bombs, finding a key item, and so on. Lastly, Flashbacks Legends would have also featured passwords for saving the game, three difficulty levels (easy, normal and hard, with a different ending for each of them), and a "help system" that hard-core players could disable. Previously Delphine Software had already cancelled some other games such as Flashback 2 (1993-1994, Genesis and SNES), versus fighter Shaq-Fu 2 (1995-1996, Genesis and SNES), an episodic adventure game titled "Humanity Project" (2001-2002, PC), Legions of Fear (2002, PS2 and PC), a survival horror / point and click adventure for PC, and Moto Racer Traffic (2003, Xbox, Ps2 and PC).

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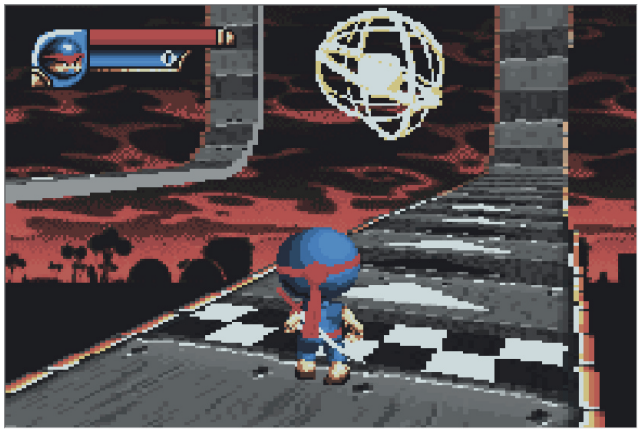

Article by: Conor Hutton

The original I-Ninja was an action-platformer developed by Argonaut Games and released in 2003 for the GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. A little after release, the developers announced that a Game Boy Advance version of the game was in development at Coyote Development Ltd. on behalf of Destination Software and was set to be released in November 2005. As with the original console version, the GBA version was also set to be published by Namco. However, this was cancelled soon after its initial announcement. Destination Software was founded in 2001 in order to manage IPs on behalf of other companies and find teams to develop them. They have released games such as ATV: Thunder

Ridge Riders and Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance for the GBA. They were purchased by GreenScreen Interactive Software in 2008 and no longer publish games under the name of Destination Software. The GBA version of I-Ninja was never going to be a direct port of the original title, but instead the developers were going to try and recapture the essence of what made I-Ninja unique in the first place while making it suitable for a portable console. It would even have retained the original's 3D graphics which would have been impressive on the GBA. There were four main gameplay modes, including running on ramps to reach the end of a level, running on barrels, arena survival, and mega robot boss battles. These four modes also featured in the original game, and the only mode missing from the GBA version was the explorable platforming levels. The team at Coyote actually had the first prototype world, which was called Robot Island, fully up and running. You could play all of the world's levels and the main boss fight at the end. However, the boss fight was incomplete, meaning you could not progress any further into the game. It was possible to play the other levels via the debug's 'level select' option on the main menu. We've actually been privileged enough to see some footage from the prototype, but unfortunately it looked more frustrating than fun. The animations were incomplete; the player couldn't turn left or right in the ramp running levels, meaning they'd fall off the edge every time and fail; and it appeared that they were unable to jump in the barrel running levels. The arena survival levels, on the other hand, worked quite well. Perhaps the most interesting thing to take away from the footage was that there was music playing in the background, meaning the team must have been quite far into the development cycle. I-Ninja GBA would have featured an array of weapons, including shurikens, swords, blowguns and a rocket launcher, which might be considered an untraditional weapon for a ninja. I-Ninja's skills would have included jumping, hovering by spinning his sword, scaling buildings, grabbing ledges, and swinging and climbing on ropes. The original press release for the game stated that it would have featured "fast paced run levels, combat arenas, ball rolling levels requiring pinpoint accuracy, and cool showdowns in the final boss levels." In addition, I-Ninja's story would have followed the highly trained I-Ninja as he took on "the world's most wicked villain, Master O-Dor, and his menacing army of Ranx." We're not one-hundred percent sure why I-Ninja on the GBA was cancelled, but it was more than likely for one of two reasons. Firstly, Namco might have lost confidence in the game and felt they would suffer too much of a financial loss if they published it. A second reason could be that Coyote was having trouble with the 3D graphics and just couldn't get the game to fully work on time. Either way, I-Ninja on the GBA was cancelled, never to be revived. The GBA version of the game wasn't the only I-Ninja to be cancelled, as Argonaut Games was also working on I-Ninja 2 for the PS2, Xbox and GameCube when they were shut down, for economic reasons, in 2004. The team at Coyote had a little more luck that those at Argonaut and went on to develop other games such as Operation: Vietnam on Nintendo DS and Wonderworld Amusement Park for Wii and DS. Sometime around 2009 or 2010, Coyote Development Ltd. changed its name to Attractive Games Ltd. and adopted the slogan "bringing people together." As Attractive Games, they worked alongside Ubisoft to create most of San Francisco and one third of the missions in Driver: San Francisco. The last piece of news to come out of the studio was that they're working on their own original game for the Apple Appstore.

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LUNA BLAZE

Article by: Conor Hutton

Luna Blaze was another lost strategy RPG for the Game Boy Advance in development by Hal Laboratory. It was originally announced at Nintendo Space World 2001 as a Japan exclusive for spring 2002, but evidently that was not the case, as can be seen by its presence in this book. What we know about the game's story is that it revolved around a boy and a girl who could use psychic powers and could gather monsters to help them fight. The gameplay would have centred on this, having the player gather a large party of monsters to fight opponents. Just like in the Pokémon games, the monsters could level up and learn new attacks, of which there were 170 to learn. Also similar to Pokémon, the player would use something called "energy balls" to summon attacks. On the other hand, battles in Luna Blaze did not focus on one-on-one fights between the monsters, instead your whole party would be on the field at once. Apparently Battland and Luna Blaze had some similarities, such as the combat system that allowed for a lot of player freedom: unfortunately nothing more is know about the games and the reason behind both of their cancellations remains a mystery to this day.

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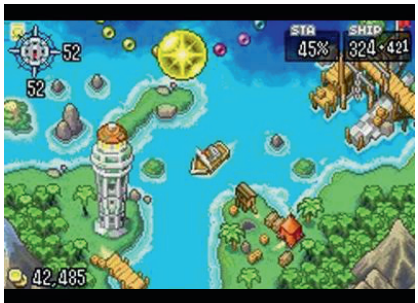
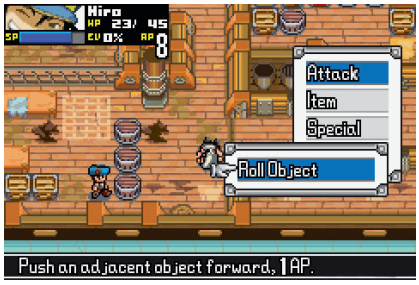
PIRATE BATTLE



Article by: Conor Hutton

Pirate Battle was a game in development for the Game Boy Advance during 2003 and 2004, with a version for the Nintendo DS being developed at a later time. It was being developed by Orbital Media, the developers of Racing Gears Advance and Scurge: Hive. It was to be a turn based strategy RPG and was heavily influenced by PlayStation's Front Mission 3, but also took inspiration from Fire Emblem, Advance Wars and Final Fantasy Tactics. Its art direction and story was influenced by the studio's previous game (Treasure Hunt, which was also cancelled) and the popular manga series One Piece. The developers were aiming to make a game on par with the other big titles in the genre, so much so that it could be mistaken for a Japanese game. Pirate Battle had an incredibly small development team mainly consisting of three people, including an artist and a programmer. Despite its small team, development was fast and the game was announced to IGN at E3 2004 along with screenshots. The game was to have over forty missions and ten playable characters, each of whom had their own strengths and weaknesses. Each

character had their own ability power which they had to gain and manage points for. These powers would have had mission changing effects. Players would have to manage their entire crew which consisted of archers, fighters, thieves and even chefs. The objective was to either sink or board the enemy's ship in order to render the opponent helpless, or completely wipe them out. Players would have been able to interact with the environment in multiple ways, including knocking over a statue to kill any character standing behind it or rolling a barrel into water to create a bridge your units could cross. There was also a plan to put a free roaming ship mode in the game. Multiplayer was going to be a huge part of the game. The first build of the game was on PC, which gave the developers a chance to battle each other in order to find out what worked, what didn't, and balance the game. They were going to attempt a single cart multiplayer mode but there was only a 50/50 chance of that working so it may not have been in the finished game had it released. The game definitely would have been playable with up to four people on separate consoles via links. It is not clear why Pirate Battles was cancelled, but we do know that Orbital Media had two other games in development at the time. There was a rush to complete them so resources were probably taken away from Pirate Battles' already small team. A lot of the studio's core programmers left to join Pandemic Studios, the developers of Star Wars: Battlefront II and The Saboteur, although that studio was eventually closed down in 2009. Orbital Media eventually released new screenshots for the game with an art direction closer to that of Fire Emblems and it was to be released on a new platform, the Nintendo DS, although it never did release. It is unlikely that we will ever see a released version of Pirate Battles because Orbital Media have not released a game since 2006 and have more than likely been closed down.



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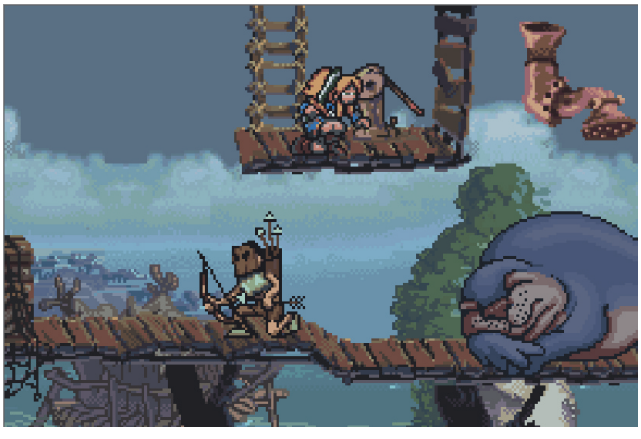
SWORD OF SIA: LADY SIA 2

Article by: Conor Hutton

Sword of Sia: Lady Sia 2 was the sequel to cult GBA action platformer Lady Sia, or at least it would have been if it wasn't cancelled. Lady Sia 2 was in development at RFX Interactive for the Game Boy Advance during 2002 and 2003. The first game's publishers, TDK Mediactive, were returning to publish the sequel. Some developers at RFX started their career in a french Amiga demoscene group known as Nihon Dreamers, taking their expertise in creating nice looking sprites with low resources to create the style of the original Lady Sia. Lady Sia 2's story would have revolved around the mysterious man who saved Sia in the first game. This time around it would have been the man who was in trouble as his kingdom was under attack and only Sia could help him. Most of the original game's cast was supposed to return, but most of them would only appear in cutscenes. The game would have been structured much like the first one with four or five worlds to explore, which each contained three levels, some puzzles to resolve and many enemies to defeat. Some of the settings would have included a city, a giant snake in the sea, Troglodyte habitations and a swamp. Each of the worlds would have contained a brand new boss, different from any in the first game. Lady Sia 2 gameplay would also have been similar to the original game, but talking to former RFX devs that seen the prototype they seem to remember Sia being able to use Griffin's kid as an attack bird and to stand on a ball trying to balance and move. Most of the team that worked on the first Lady Sia game went to work on other projects at RFX and when Stephane Zettwoog (writer, concept artist and gameplay designer) left the team Raphaël Grosjean (artist and gameplay designer) stepped



up and took on his role as main artist / art director for the sequel. Nihon Dreamers' lead musician also jumped on board to help Lady Sia 2's team, creating great chiptunes for its soundtrack. According to our sources somewhere between 33-50% of the game was completed before the cancellation. The big question then is why was it cancelled? Well RFX Interactive had a bad history when it came to dealing with publishers, in fact some publishers didn't even pay RFX for the games they had made for them. In one occasion a publisher claimed that Nintendo did not approve a game made by RFX so they could not pay them, however the title was already being sold in stores. This actually drove RFX near bankruptcy on one occasion, but they were saved when they were placed under judicial oversight. At this stage RFX managed to scrape by with the money they made from the first Lady Sia and the company's CEO, Bernard Auré, negotiated a deal with TDK to turn Lady Sia into a franchise. Along with Lady Sia 2 on the GBA they were also planning Lady Sia 3D for the GameCube. It looked like RFX's luck was about to change, but as it turned out that would not be the case. TDK was actually undergoing some reconstruction of its own and it decided that its gaming branch was not as profitable as they thought it would be, so they decided to cancel Lady Sia 3D and said they would not pay for the prototype that RFX had already worked on. Auré had warned them that if they didn't pay up RFX would be forced to shut down, but TDK thought this was just a scheme to get paid. However, that was the sad truth and RFX Interactive was indeed shut down. This was the final nail in the coffin for Lady Sia 2 and the work that had been completed for it never saw the light of day. Apparently one of Auré's friends bought the rights to Lady Sia after the studio closed, but the IP seems to be caught in a legal limbo. The last game ever released by RFX was a GBA version of Turok: Evolution in 2002.

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URBAN REFLEX

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Urban Reflex is a cancelled single-player first person shooter that was being developed for Nintendo's Gameboy Advance in 2003. The game was quite a technical achievement at the time as it was using a nice looking 3D engine, something that was unusual for the GBA 2D-focused hardware. The developer was Graphic

State, a UK-based company that was also responsible for the Gameboy Advance version of Sega's Crazy Taxi. The team broke ground back in 2001 with its first-generation Gameboy Advance first person shooter, Dark Arena; the company was supposed to be taking what they learned from that particular game and putting it to use in Urban Reflex. Graphic State developed a new first person shooter 3D engine specifically for their new project. The engine was supposed to be much more advanced than the one used in Dark Arena, with features such as fully textured surfaces (ceilings, floors and walls), animated textures, higher resolution, detailed enemy sprites, more sophisticated enemy AI, smooth framerates (at least double the frames of games such as Doom), destructible environments, and some lighting effects. In Urban Reflex, players assumed the role of special agent Max Reflex. His mission? Going into enemy territory to pull the cover off a secret criminal organisation responsible for all kinds of crimes and cases of corruption throughout the game's unnamed city. The character's primary weapon was an assault rifle, and the title was supposed to include twelve levels, structured in twenty different missions. Some of these levels included hotels, subways, airports, hideout villas, and even rooftops in a downtown area. One of the early levels was set within a subway network where the player had to find an enemy agent who had set a bomb in the subway. The player had to track down the bomb and defuse it before it detonated. They did this by using a DynaBot (a remote robot mine); the enemy had hidden the bomb in an inaccessible area, which meant the character itself couldn't reach it. Gameplay wasn't particularly complicated; it was all about shooting and blowing stuff (and enemies) up. Weapon selection was quite varied—shotguns, assault rifles, grenades, an Uzi machine gun and other weapons and gadgets such as guided rockets, cluster bombs, remote robot mines, sniper scope, and remote mine charges. The character could even use night vision goggles to find his way around when the enemy triggered the security system and the lights turned off. Controls were surprisingly free (for a Gameboy Advance game); players could aim up and down as well as strafe left and right during the action. The D-pad was used to move; shoulder buttons strafed, "B" was to crouch or activate, "A" was to Fire, and "Select" was to Change Weapon. Gameplay videos have surfaced on the Internet, showing a pretty advanced version of the game - according to an interview with the developers in gamezone.com, it was about 90% complete; they were in the final testing/tweaking phase. Nobody seems to know why Urban Reflex was ultimately shelved, but considering that no publisher was revealed during its development phase, one could assume that it simply never got one.

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Nintendo DS

Article by: Lee Garbutt

It wasn't supposed to succeed the Game Boy Advance. It was ugly, and it contained hardware features that had everyone scratching their heads. But despite all that, not only did it become the biggest-selling handheld console ever made, it's the second highest-selling gaming system of all time. Not bad for Nintendo's "Third Pillar" system. When the prototype form of the Nintendo DS was shown at E3 2004, very few people knew what to think about this odd system. With its dual-screen design and touch-screen, this was Nintendo at their most experimental - Considering the original model contained a Game Boy Advance cartridge slot, along with another for the system's proprietary card media, it felt like even Nintendo were cautious in releasing the DS to market, especially as the Game Boy Advance and Gamecube were still viable platforms, prompting Nintendo themselves to dub the DS as a "third pillar" to distance themselves away from it if it had flopped. But they needn't have worried, as although it took a little while to catch on upon its release in late 2004/early 2005, the Nintendo DS would prove to be an astronomical success, and pave the way for the company's resurgence, as they dipped their toes into the famous "blue ocean" strategy, disrupting the industry by appealing to a potential audience that weren't into video games. Sure, the Nintendo faithful had their Marios, their Zeldas and their Metroids; but joining those established franchises, were a batch of whole new ones that could capture and reel in consumers of all ages, regardless of gaming experience (or lack of). With dual-screens, built-in microphone and the advent of touch gaming in an age before smartphones, developers could truly create unique games. Nintendo themselves impressed early on with a worthy port of Super Mario 64 (2004) that could use the touch screen as some sort of analog stick. Wario Ware Touched! (2004) took the series to even crazier heights with some incredibly inventive mini-games, while the two Legend of Zelda titles (2007, 2009) released on the system controlled predominantly with the touch screen. It had what the Nintendo 64 and Gamecube lacked - third party support, and in spades too. Even as the threat of piracy pervaded the system for most of its life, thanks to the infamous R4 flashcart for playing homebrew (and more likely, to play illegal game backups), the Nintendo DS was the system to develop for. While Sony's new PlayStation Portable system concentrated on bringing the console experience to the handheld market, complete with loading times thanks to a battery-draining optical drive; the Nintendo DS offered entirely new experiences, from Nintendogs' adorable digital pets (2005), to the massively successful Brain Training series (2005). Even as the R4 and its ilk became more widespread, especially as more average consumers caught wind of these cartridges, the Nintendo DS went from strength to strength. It also took Nintendo into new technological endeavors, as the system could connect to the internet via WiFi, with the company later launching the Nintendo WiFi Connection services, alongside Mario Kart DS (2005). While Nintendo had dabbled with internet-enabled consoles in the past, this was the first time it was feasible out of the box - And it worked. Granted, the system's user-unfriendly Friend Code system for adding and playing games with friends was awful, unwieldy and nigh-on useless at times, but it was but a first step for Nintendo's future online plans. As it happened with the GBA, Nintendo and their third parties released a long series of popular games and hidden gems on the Nintendo DS, such as Jump Super Stars (2005), Kirby: Canvas Curses (2005), Animal Crossing: Wild World (2005), Ossu! Tatakae! Ouendan! (2005), Lost In Blue (2005), Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow (2005), Phoenix Wright (2005), New Super Mario Bros. (2006), Contact (2006), Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland (2006), Pokémon Diamond and Pearl (2006), Star Fox Command (2006), Hotel Dusk (2007), Etrian Odyssey (2007), The World Ends with You (2007), Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles (2007), Bangai-O Spirits (2008), Soul Bubbles (2008), Flower, Sun & Rain (2008), Soma Bringer (2008), Phantasy Star Zero (2008), Dragon Quest IX (2009), Rhythm Paradise (2009), Scribblenauts (2009), Steal Princess (2009), "Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors" (2009), Sakura Note (2009), Ghost Trick (2010), Radiant Historia (2010) and many, many more. In true Nintendo style, the DS experienced several hardware revisions. The Nintendo DS Lite (2006) is arguably the most popular of these, making the system smaller, lighter and improving the screen brightness. Following that in 2008/2009 was the Nintendo DSi, which added two digital cameras, an SD card slot as well as the ability to download software from the internet using the brand new DSiWare store - However, the popular Game Boy Advance cartridge slot was removed, signalling the end of the Game Boy brand. In a change from making handheld consoles smaller, the Nintendo DSi XL (2009/2010) bucked the trend by adding much bigger screens, a bigger battery and an improved pen-like stylus. Even today, the Nintendo DS' legacy continues, thanks to Nintendo's current portable system, the Nintendo 3DS - Retaining its predecessors basic design (as well as including backwards compatibility). What should have been a quirky experimental system, ended up being one of the best and most popular systems Nintendo ever developed. In the following pages we'll take a look at a few lost games that were planned to be released on Nintendo DS: original projects, ports of popular home-console titles, revivals of old-school franchises and awesome 2D pixel art that will never be.

A BOY AND HIS BLOB

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

A Boy and his Blob is a 2.5D puzzle-platformer that was being developed in 2005 for the Nintendo DS at Skyworks Interactive, a software house co-founded by aBahB series creator David Crane. The publisher would have been Majesco which had already cancelled the 2002 game A Boy and His Blob: Jelly's Cosmic Adventure for the Game Boy Advance. In the original aBahB, for NES, a young boy had to get through dangerous environments with the help of a blob that, by eating jelly beans, could assume the form of various objects such as a ladder or an umbrella. IGN tested an early version of aBahB DS at E3 2005, but the most reliable source of information for the game is an official fact-sheet posted at the time on Nintendo's Australian Website. Six years after the end of the first game Blobert comes back to Earth to warn the unnamed boy, of the original A Boy and his Blob, that the Emperor of Blobolonia has been secretly exiled to our planet and had quickly regained his powers and was plotting to enslave humanity. While the title now had 3D graphics the action was still restricted to a 2D plane; it appears that the gameplay was mostly unchanged from the first game apart from the addition of a candy shop where the main character could select, and probably buy, new jelly beans to bring with him to the next level. Like many other DS games one of the screens was used as an overhead map and for selecting items (in this case jelly beans) simply by touching them. According to the same fact-sheet a Boy and his Blob DS featured over 15 stages and more than 15 jelly beans (other sources reported "at least 20"), including those that let the blob became a ladder, a trampoline, a bomb, a blowtorch and a suit of armour. David Crane said in a 2009 interview with G4TV that aBahB DS was shelved due to Majesco's financial difficulties. A new aBahB title was launched in 2009 for the Wii but it was developed by Wayforward and it was a completely different game than the lost DS version. In 2015 Skyworks Technologies main focus is on iOS development; their last releases were World Cup Table Tennis and Ugh!

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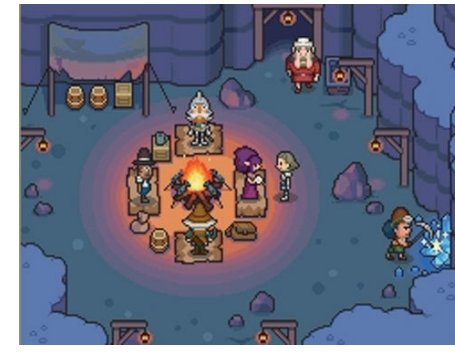
FANTASY LIFE

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Fantasy Life is a simulation / adventure RPG developed by Level-5, Brownie Brown and h.a.n.d. Inc, released on Nintendo 3DS in Japan on December 2012 and then in 2014 in Western territories. However, the game was first planned to be released on the original Nintendo DS in 2010; a version, which was later cancelled. The lost Nintendo DS version was originally announced at the LEVEL 5 VISION conference in August 2009, as a collaboration between 2 of the most talented teams focused on Japanese RPGs: Level 5 and Brownie Brown (renamed as 1-UP Studio in 2013). Today Level 5 is one of the most popular software houses in Japan thanks to projects like Dark Cloud, Dragon Quest VIII and IX, Professor Layton, Danball Senki and Yo-Kai Watch, selling millions of games every year. Brownie Brown was founded in 2000 by Nintendo to create a team focused on RPGs for their portable consoles, hiring many former Squaresoft developers (such as Kameoka Shinichi and Kouji Tsuda) to release cult-classics, Magical Vacation, Sword of

Mana and Mother 3. One of the most obvious differences between the released Fantasy Life 3DS and the cancelled Fantasy Life DS is the graphics: the lost version used beautiful 2D pixel art style that made it look a lot like Mother 3 (after all Brownie Brown worked on both), while the published game is in full 3D, a change, that for some fans made the title lose part of its charm. Fantasy Life on 3DS is still a wonderful game to look at and it became a favourite among many owner of Nintendo's "3D" handheld (selling over 300,000 copies in Japan). Fortunately the promised gameplay was kept intact in the 3DS version, making Fantasy Life some sort of "fantasy town simulator", a mix between games such as Harvest Moon, Animal Crossing, The Legend of the River King (Harvest Fishing), Little King's Story and more. Players are free to choose a favourite "job" between the 12 available (Alchemist, Magician, Mercenary, Tailor, Hunter, Cook, Blacksmith, etc.), picking out the gender and appearance of their character, to create an avatar that is as related to them as possible. The game then plays in relation of the chosen role, being able to explore the world as a paladin to fight monsters, sew clothes as a tailor, creating weapons as a Blacksmith and so on. By completing all those "fun daily chores" from your fantasy job, you can level up your character to be able to accept even harder works / quest, helping more people and unlock new abilities, features and reach their role "ending". It seems that the original 2D version of Fantasy Life would have had at least 20 jobs to choose from, but a few were cut in the final release. It was also reported that Nobuo Uematsu (composer of many memorable songs in the Final Fantasy series) was creating 20 ending songs for the game, one for each available job, but it's currently unknown if he had to cut down his tracks too or if the remaining ones were reused somehow in the final game. Another small differences between the 2D and 3D version of Fantasy Life is that the cancelled DS game was meant to have an online mode to play it in coop with friends, but the original 3DS version did not have this option and the multiplayer was added only later with the "updated" re-release titled "Fantasy Life Link!" in July 2013 (in America and Europe, they only released the Link! version as it came out a couple of years later). As it happened with other cancelled DS games, it's possible that Level 5 thought that the handheld was at the end of its life cycle and it would have been more profitable to release Fantasy Life on the new Nintendo handheld. As of October 2015 Brownie Brown / 1-UP Studio continue to help Nintendo to develop popular games for portable and home consoles, such as Super Mario 3D Land, Super Mario 3D World and Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker. Level-5 continue to earn millions of yen thanks to the super popular (at least in Japan) Yo-Kai Watch series and at the "LEVEL 5 VISION" 2015 conference they announced a Fantasy Life sequel exclusively for Android and iPhone.

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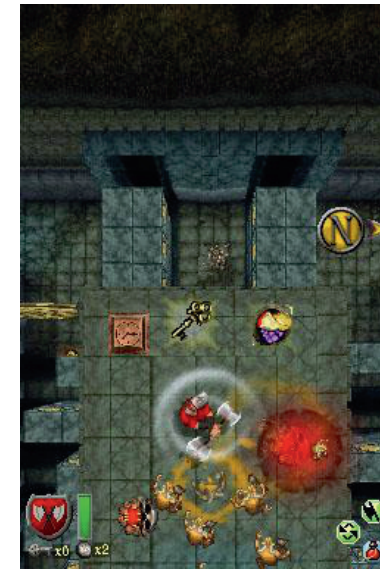
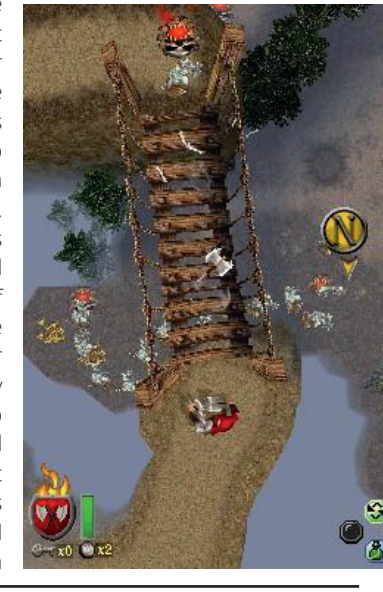
GAUNTLET

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

In November 2004 Nintendo just released their new portable console, the Nintendo DS, in North America but they were concerned about Sony's first handheld, the PSP, that would have been released just a month later in Japan. The PSP was a powerful machine compared to the DS and Nintendo wanted to have a strong line-up to compete with them in the American market. Sony was going to publish a multiplayer coop action game titled "Untold Legends: Brotherhood of the Blade" as one of the launch games for the western audience and

Nintendo thought to counter-attack with a popular franchise, gaining the Gauntlet IP from Midway, to create a new, exclusive Gauntlet game for DS. As most gamers probably know, Gauntlet is a classic series of fantasy hack & slash with a strong coop component: starting in 1985 with the first arcade release, the game was one of the few cabinets in which up to 4 players were able to collaborate together against enemies, to finish the game. Players were able to choose 4 different classes (Warrior, Wizard, Valkyrie, and Elf) to explore dungeons and to fight against hordes of monsters that keep spawning until someone destroyed their generator. All following games in the Gauntlet series use the same multiplayer focused gameplay and Nintendo wanted to have another great chapter for their Nintendo DS, with offline and online coop, and was able to rival Untold Legends. Nintendo asked two different western developers to pitch their ideas for this new portable Gauntlet and Backbone Entertainment (a division of Foundation 9 Entertainment) were the ones to win the contract. Gauntlet DS would have been a reboot of the saga, with all the classic features of past titles and some new additions. Backbone had already developed many popular franchises for Nintendo's portable consoles, such as various Spyro titles, a Grand Theft Auto conversion for GBA and Age of Empires: The Age of Kings for DS, plus some PSP projects as Death Jr. and Sonic Rivals, so they were experienced in creating games for the handled market. Gauntlet DS was a really ambitious project and Backbone was able to develop 3 regions that spanned through 40 levels, fully functional offline and online coop mode, 4 different characters to choose from, LV-UP / EXP system to increase stats, a "fame" meter that would have risen by collecting more gold (making characters more powerful for the duration of the level), ranked deathmatch multiplayer with different modes (VS, team VS, capture the flag) and a digital encyclopaedia with information on all the enemies and items found during the game. The online multiplayer (coop and VS) also had voice-over chat during gameplay, something that no other DS title had, only Metroid: Hunters had some sort of vocal chat in waiting rooms, but not during the actual game. While Nintendo was waiting for Gauntlet DS to be completed, sales of Sony's PSP never rose enough to really damage DS' popularity in USA and they realized that their focus on the "casual" market with titles like Nintendogs or Brain Training was selling many more handhelds than publishing games for the "hardcore audience". At this time, Nintendo then decided that they would have not needed to directly publish Gauntlet DS themselves and they dropped the title from their release plans. After spending so much time and money on the project, Nintendo of America was still confident about the quality of the game so they helped Backbone to find another publisher and in April 2008 the project was officially announced to be released by Eidos Interactive. Planned to be published just a few months later in Q3 2008, the game was almost complete and was soon sent to magazines for reviews, where it was rated with positive comments on Nintendo Power, Official Nintendo Magazine and Retro Gamer. Unfortunately Gauntlet DS became a victim of Eidos' economic problems at the time (they were later bought by Square Enix in April 2009) and Midway Games bankruptcy in February 2009 (at the time still owners of the Gauntlet license). With a collapsing publisher and the sale of the Gauntlet IP to Warner Bros, there was no chance for Gauntlet DS to ever be released. After Eidos and Midway went down, it seems that in early 2009 Backbone got in contact with Majesco Entertainment to try again to release Gauntlet DS on the market, and the game was already rated Teen on the ESRB website. For unknown reasons Gauntlet was not published by Majesco either, maybe because the Nintendo DS was already 5 years old at the time (the following year Nintendo announced their 3DS) and publishers were not interested in releasing big titles on





this ageing handheld. While it's a shame that Backbone was not able to see an official release of their portable version of Gauntlet, at least gamers are able to enjoy it: in 2013 a final, 100% playable version of the game was leaked online, and we can easily play it on a Nintendo DS using a flash card, alone or in coop with friends (unfortunately only offline, the online multiplayer will not work as the server doesn't exist). Thanks to this luckily un-official release we can try for ourselves to see how good the game is and can see if it would have been a great multiplayer game for Nintendo DS. As of October 2015 Backbone Entertainment are still alive and they are currently working on the Mega Man Legacy Collection for Capcom. In 2007 part of the Backbone team that worked on Gauntlet DS went to create Other Ocean Interactive, releasing many handheld, mobile and console games, often in collaboration with Double Fine (as with Iron Brigade, Costume Quest and Stacking).

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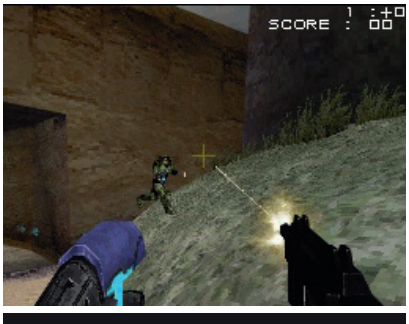
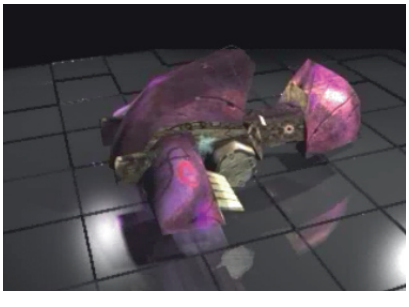
HALO DS

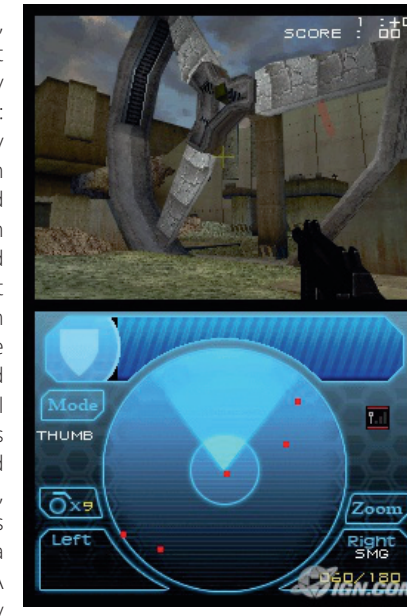




Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

In January 2007, Matt Casamassina, one of the original Co-founders of IGN, and lead editor for their Nintendo sections, wrote on his personal blog that he played a Nintendo DS version of Halo. Such a game was never announced before and people were sceptical. Why would Bungie or Microsoft permit their major IP to be released on a competitor's console? Well, first of all, Halo DS was never released. Still, the project existed at some point and was not a fan mod as someone speculated. While the idea of a Microsoft game on a Nintendo console could sound weird for some, we have to remember that it happened before, as with Rare developed titles Banjo-Pilot for GBA, Diddy Kong Racing and Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise for DS. How much money could have made from one of the most loved multiplayer FPS on one of the most played consoles in the mid 2000? Halo 2 was released in 2004 for the original Xbox and even if heavily cut, it was received with critical acclaim by fans and the press: it sold about 2.4 million copies on the first day, and in its lifetime it reached more than 8 million copies, with a user base of about 24 million Xbox in mid-2006. With the Nintendo DS' user base of about 36 million units worldwide at the end of 2006, it's easy to understand that Halo DS had the potential to be one of the most profitable games ever created, and it would have made millions of gamers very happy to finally play their favourite multiplayer title on the go, everywhere. No more need to organize LAN parties with multiple TVs, pads, Ethernet cables and consoles, kids and adults would have been able to easily play portable HALO multiplayer in class or on lunch break at the office. Sounds epic, doesn't it? Unfortunately, this was not meant to be. The first proof of a working prototype of Halo DS was shown by Casamassina on IGN in October 2007 (just a few weeks after Halo 3 was released on the Xbox 360), with a couple of videos showing him and another IGN editor playing multiplayer in the fan-favourite Zanzibar map from Halo 2 (also known as The Last Resort in Halo 3). What we can see in that footage is exactly what we would expect from a de-make of Halo on a much less powerful console, low polygonal models and textures, but with the same style weapons and vehicles from the home-console version. We can see two Master Chiefs shooting each other near a Warthog, while dual wielding Covenant and Spartan weapons. The control method was similar to the one seen in Metroid Prime Hunter (one of the most popular first person shooters on the DS) with the stylus used to aim precisely on the screen. In the same videos, Matt explained that this Halo demo for DS was an unsolicited pitch that an unnamed AAA publisher proposed to Bungie and Microsoft. The project was then cancelled because the studio was not able to get the rights to use the Halo franchise. As we wrote before, Halo DS could

have sold like hotcakes and by seeing video-proof of its existence, there should be no more doubts that a development team tried to get to work on something like this by creating a pitch demo. Still many gamers thought that the Halo DS demo was just an elaborate hoax: they analysed the footage published on IGN and found many similarities between the prototype and another DS first person shooter: Goldeneye: Rogue Agent, developed by N-Space and published by EA in June 2005. This led to a theory according to which Matt - with the help of someone else - would have created a Halo mod for Rogue Agent just to show to the world that he was not lying about this lost game. After all, there were many identical details between Halo DS and Rogue Agent: the same HUD with score numbers, the health on the screen when hit, some of the sounds, the crosshair, and the yellow name of the guns when picked up. Was Halo DS a real game that could have been released if things went different? For us there was no reason why Matt would have lied about Halo DS, and created such a complex hoax, but as we were tired of speculations, we decided to investigate this project, to finally find the truth. It was clear that the similarities with Rogue Agent could not have been a coincidence and EA was a possible name for the unknown AAA publisher that pitched the project. As Rogue Agent was developed by N-Space, we started from there and talked with a few of their former developers that worked on the game, until we found the answer: Halo DS was indeed real, and N-Space made that short multiplayer demo in just under a week, to pitch for a full project. Only the Zanzibar map was available, divided into two halves (the "wheel" and "ocean" sides) by a long tunnel for loading purposes. Even if we don't see it in those IGN videos, the team also created a Ghost model that would have been available along with the Warthog. Everyone involved with the Halo DS pitch demo was super excited about the possibility to work on such an important project, and it was quite the disappointment when the deal fell through. Probably it's not a huge consolation, but people from the team remember how they had fun playing Halo DS in multiplayer during their lunch break, even if it seems that Mario Kart DS was the most played, maxing out the local play option every time. After this undeveloped Halo pitch, N-Space was still able to continue working on a long series of first person shooters for Nintendo DS, with the successful Call of Duty ports published by Activision (CoD: Modern Warfare, World at War, Mobilized, Black Ops and Defiance) and the portable version of the 2010 remake of Goldeneye 007. While DS owners did not have a portable Halo to enjoy, the console still had some of the best multiplayer titles released for handheld and we can only hope that someday the Halo DS demo could leak online for everyone to play.



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MOONLIGHT FABLES

Article by: Fernando Garcia

In August of 2004, three months before the official launch of the Nintendo DS in North America, Nintendo released its new console line-up, which included some western-focused publishers. Amongst those titles, there was a game called Moonlight Fables, an interesting side scrolling action-adventure that looked similar to beloved titles like Castlevania and Metroid. The game was being designed by a company called Cyber Philharmonic Video Game Design Inc (Cyber Philharmonic for short), a new company located in Irvine, California. It was

founded by a group of experienced friends who were former co-workers, and they intended to keep it a small to medium sized company with the promise to consistently deliver quality video games and engines. Moonlight Fables was the company's first game, and it would be released by Majesco, the publisher of the Bust a Move series, Advent Rising, BloodRayne, Psychonauts, Phantom Dust and many other well-known games. In September of 2004, the first details of the game's story and concept arts were published. Moonlight Fables would tell the adventures of the teenager Trista Silver, a recent Strike Force officer graduate and unwitting heir the Wolfen Empire throne. With monsters threatening to take over the world, it was her duty to protect the innocent from harm. During the game, players would have the ability to manipulate the phases of the moon using the Nintendo DS touch screen to unlock Trista's werewolf powers. The game's world was filled with werewolves, puzzles, and mysteries to uncover. Later on, more on the game's system was published on Majesco's website. The game would utilize Nintendo DS specific features such as the touchscreen input, dual-screen support and even network play, but the details of how the latter one would work were never disclosed. Trista would count with a variety of weapons, including the mystical Moon Sword, an array of blasters, as well as her own werewolf claws and teeth and special attacks depending on the position of the moon. Regarding the graphics, it would have a vast landscape built with the combination of 2D and 3D art styles, and a dynamic camera that would zoom in and out to highlight the action and imagery; the gameplay would be seamless as the entire world would be displayed as one large area. Some RPG elements were also available as players would interact with multiple characters to obtain information on the story, quests or equipment, and Trista's attributes could be built up by defeating powerful enemies; the player's actions would also affect the game's story development. In February of 2015, Majesco published some updates on other titles revealed at the August 2004 line-up, but no details on Moonlight Fables were present. There were rumors from inside sources confirming that the game had been cancelled, and in response to them, Majesco stated that it was not cancelled, but was being reimagined, and the game's new direction was being evaluated by the publisher. After that, no more news on the game were ever released and the game disappeared from Majesco's line-up. Cyber Philharmonic did not work on any other game and its website was also discontinued in the same month that Majesco announced Moonlight Fables' major overhaul.

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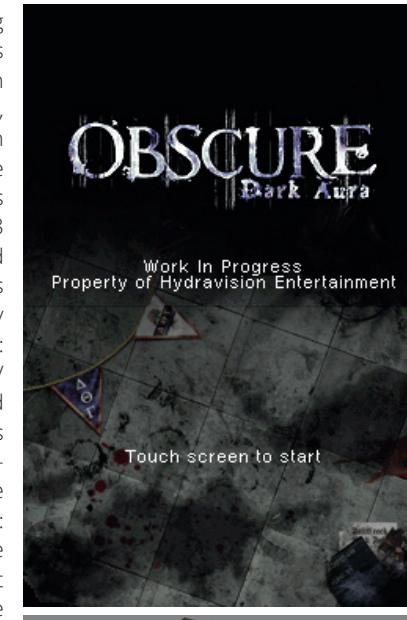
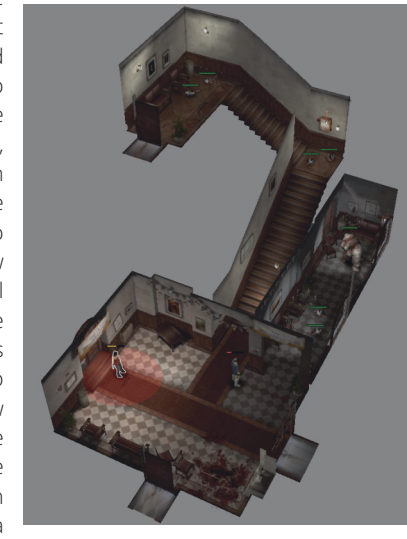
OBSCURE: DARK AURA

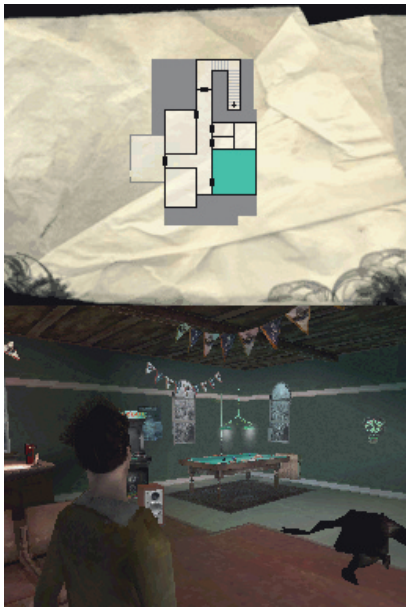
Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Obscure was a short series of co-op survival horror games created by French studio Hydravision Entertainment, with a first chapter published by DreamCatcher Interactive in 2004 for PS2, Xbox and PC. The game received good to average reviews and it soon gained a cult following of fans, thanks to its school settings, multiple characters to use, catchy soundtrack (featuring pop-punk/rock bands Sum 41 and SPAN) and a fun cooperative mode. The main plot of the game was inspired by classic slasher horror movies and centered around a group of teenagers (Josh Carter, Stan Jones, Kenny Matthews, Shannon Matthews and Ashley Thompson) trying to survive against the principal of Leafmore High School and his plan to test an unknown plant spore on students. Unfortunately, those experiments turned people into monsters surrounded by a black aura: players had to explore Leafmore High and kill down enemies in a classic yet more arcadey survival horror using guns and flashlights. In 2007, Hydravision released the sequel published by Playlogic (Europe) and Ignition (USA): set 2 years after the events of the first game, the main protagonists that survived Leafmore High (Shannon Matthews, Stanley Jones and Kenny Matthews) enrolled in





the Fallcreek University, where a new distress was growing underneath. Mysterious black flowers blooming all over the campus were used by students as some kind of hallucinogenic drug, but soon it started to turn them into monsters. Shannon, Stanley and Kenny, with the help of new friends (Corey Wilde, Mei Wang, Jun Wang, Sven Hansen and Amy Brookes) will have to fight once again against the devilish plant. With Obscure 2 receiving similar average reviews to its predecessor but still maintaining a good number of fans, in 2008 Hydravision and Playlogic decided to port the game to the PSP and Nintendo DS, to gain a few more sales. While the PSP version was completed and released in 2009, the Nintendo DS port quietly vanished and the only info available was its planned title, Obscure: Dark Aura. Being impossible to manage a game similar to the PS2 / Xbox version on the not-so-powerful DS, many speculations and rumors about what it could have been have circulated online. Was Dark Aura meant to be a new chapter of the Obscure series or a de-make of the second one? After a long series of research, we were able to gain new facts to finally shed some light on the project. Obscure: Dark Aura was really meant to be a port of Obscure 2 for the Nintendo DS, but with new gameplay features and a slightly different storyline. Initially an early prototype was created to try to develop the game as a top-down tactical RPG, but the idea was scrapped after just a few months. Then Obscure 2 DS became a more traditional third person action game, using a fully 3D engine to make it more similar to the original PS2 / Xbox version. Corey, Shannon and Stan were the playable characters in Dark Aura, and as in the other Obscure games, each of them had their own set of abilities and a major power in common. Early in the game, Corey would discover that he could use the “dark aura” from the monster’s dead bodies to transfer it into another living one in order to make it explode. This was a new gameplay mechanic that was completely absent from the original version and that would have probably been implemented through the DS touch screen. An example of this would have been the boss planned for the Brotherhood area, a horrible creature that resists to every weapon and generates some little monsters. Using the new Dark Aura power, players had to make the little creatures explode near the boss to hurt it. Manipulation of the Dark Aura was the common ability that each playable character could use, even if with different levels of absorption. Corey had a medium "Dark Aura Absorption" level, but if his "Dark Aura Gage” became full, he’d be able to run faster. His specific ability was to slow-down time for a few seconds and kill all enemies without being hurt. Shannon had a very high "Dark Aura Absorption" level and when her "Dark Aura Gage” became full, she could shoot two times faster. Stan had the lowest "Dark Aura Absorption" level but he was able to view the monsters’ weak points and could shoot them to do critical damage (this power did not consume Dark Aura). Also, when Stan’s "Dark Aura Gage” became full, he would slowly regain life. The general plot in Dark Aura was quite similar to Obscure 2 in how it unrolled the main storyline, with Leonard Friedman still being alive as an evil tree and Jedidiah being his mutated son, but the fate of the game’s protagonists was heavily changed, so much so that those who died in the original game could have survived in the DS version and vice-versa. After the woods area, Corey would find Shannon in the courtyard and Stan is missing. When players reach Leafmore High, they find Jedidiah who is trying to kill Stan: if they are fast enough they could save Stan who becomes a new playable character. If they are too slow, Stan dies. In the original Obscure 2, Stan always survives till the end of the game, along with Shannon. One of the most tragic deaths in Obscure 2 was the suicide of Corey, who kills himself just before the final boss (Kenny), because it assassinated his girlfriend. This does not happen in Dark Aura. Corey does not commit suicide and he can survive through the whole game, with his own version of the ending. The final boss was not even Kenny on the DS version. The exterior alley of Leafmore High had a corridor with a unique door which was blocked by some giant roots. As it happens with the other monsters, the roots were also afraid of the light. By solving a new puzzle in the enthronement room of the Brotherhood, players would find a secret library hiding a “Über Flashlight”, a “common” item in the original Obscure 2, but a key one in Dark Aura. Using the Über Flashlight players could burn the roots protecting the corridor door and reach the final boss of Dark Aura: Leonard



Friedman in his new tree form. While Leonard was just a mid / late game boss in Obscure 2, on the DS it is the ending one. Its son Jedidiah is also alive in a dark form, because he absorbed the dark aura used by players to defeat him during an earlier fight. It seems that Jedidiah is not killed by Corey before the final boss with a chainsaw, as is what happens in Obscure 2. A new area was also planned for Dark Aura, an Electric Plant near Leafmore High. Outside the school, an elevator could give access to the second floor but there is no more electricity in the building. Taking a manhole, players would be able to access to the Electric Plant where they had to fix the building's site electricity, welding new wires on a control board to solve the problem (perhaps with a new minigame that used the touch screen). With Obscure 1 and 2 being acclaimed by fans for their co-op mode, a couple of multiplayer modes were also planned to be included in Dark Aura. A 4 player "versus mode" would see one player impersonating a monster hunting the others who tried to escape and hide themselves. While a full co-op story mode was not possible on the Nintendo DS, Hydravision still wanted to add some sort of teamwork between players and developed a 2 player co-op focused on killing a more powerful boss from the single player game; the monster could go through the entire map to find the 2 players, so they had to be really quick to find ammunition and be ready to face it. In the end, Obscure: Dark Aura was cancelled when Playlogic fell into economic issues and was not able to support the project anymore. As far as we were able to gather, Dark Aura was essentially completed when canned. A few sources told us that a bunch of test / preview cartridges were even printed before the project was completely canned. In August 2010, Playlogic officially closed down for bankruptcy, after failing to gain new cash when their latest game, Fairytale Fights, Vertigo and Infernal, sold way less than expected. Hydravision tried to find a new publisher for Dark Aura, but without success. Sales for Nintendo DS third party games were slowly dying and it would have been difficult to gain enough profit from such a project. Nintendo officially unveiled their new 3DS at E3 2010 and it would have been safer to develop a game for the new system. Rumors of a new Obscure from Hydravision were around since late 2011 and in August 2012 they finally revealed a teaser website for their new project: Obscure, a cartoony side-scrolling 4-player beat 'em-up spin-off planned for 3DS, PSN, Xbox Live Arcade and Steam. In late 2012, unfortunately Hydravision went bankrupt and the studio was shut down. Former Hydravision employees decided to split in two and create two smaller companies according to the projects they were working on. Although some people simply left, the remaining developers founded "Mighty Rocket Studio" and "Seaven Studio". They managed to get their projects back (Obscure D for Mighty Rocket Studio, and "Ethan Meteor Hunter" for Seaven Studio) before everything would disappear. Later in 2013 Mighty Rocket Studios also changed the title of their Obscure reboot into "Final Exam", after negative backlash from fans of the series that did not like seeing such a different game under the Obscure name. Even with a different title, Final Exam kept a few easter eggs from its original inspiration. As written in the official Mighty Rocket Studios blog: "To begin, a whole map is dedicated to Leafmore. We took back the school emblematic environments to recreate a similar atmosphere. In Final Exam, there are also areas infected by the Dark Aura. Be careful, in these areas: monsters become more dangerous! You'll also meet some characters again. The headmaster of Leafmore High School, Herbert Friedman, will be there to give you a hard time, and Shannon will make a brief appearance as well." Final Exam was finally released in November 2013 for PSN, Xbox Live and Steam. Since then, not much is known about the current situation of Mighty Rocket Studios or if they will ever return to develop a classic survival horror in the Obscure series.

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SPACE AGENCY

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Space Agency is a cancelled action RPG planned for the Nintendo DS that was pitched in 2009 by Audio Inc, the studio founded in 2005 by Akira Ueda, the master-mind behind hidden gems such as Contact and Sakura Note for DS. A video with some mock-ups and information about how the game could have been was uploaded on YouTube by the team, trying to gain interest from gamers and gaming websites to find more support to then pitch the project to different publishers. Before creating Audio Inc Akira Ueda worked as a background / map designer at Squaresoft during their golden age of SNES RPGs (on Final Fantasy IV, Secret of Mana and Super Mario RPG) and later he joined cult-team Love-de-Lic, a company that created some of the most original and wacky games ever, such as "Moon: Remix RPG Adventure" and "UFO: A Day in the Life" for PlayStation. In 1999 Ueda joined Grasshopper Manufacture to help developing fan favourite games as “Flower, Sun, and Rain” and “Shining Soul” 1 & 2. It’s easy to see why it’s such a shame that Space Agency was never released, as this could have been another great adventure with memorable characters and a funny storyline. Space Agency’s planned graphic style was similar to the one used for the “top screen world” in Contact, with 2D pre-rendered backgrounds and stylish pixel-art characters. Players would have been part of a space squad hired to defend 8 planets in a futuristic galaxy, freely flying from one planet to another, to explore the area, resolve quests, find new loot, skills and gears, fight against space pirates and restore peace. During space sequences we would have been able to travel the galaxy in full 3D using the spaceship to shoot down enemies in real time and reply to emergency calls to help people in need on the different planets. Unfortunately Space Agency was never signed by any publisher and this DS pitch was never developed into a full game, maybe because previous Audio Inc titles performed poorly and the project was not backed up by a popular IP. In June 2010 Akira Ueda wrote in the official Audio Inc Twitter profile that Space Agency would have been a perfect title for the new (at the time) Nintendo 3DS, but as far as October 2015 the game is still unseen and we don’t know if the project will ever be resurrected. On an interesting note, Audio Inc official Twitter profile still has Space Agency concept arts as their profile background. The team seems alive, but their latest released game was Sakura Note: Ima ni Tsunagaru Mirai in 2009. Akira Ueda latest officially recorded gaming collaboration was to help planning Paper Mario: Sticker Star for Nintendo 3DS in 2012 and lately he is creating and sharing many music tracks online in his SoundCloud page but we don’t know if he’s currently working on music for other videogames.

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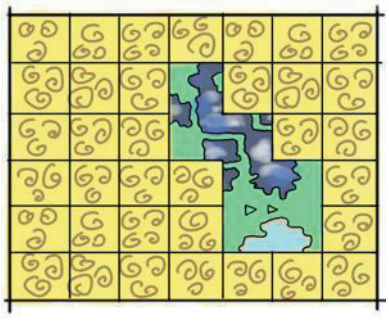
TOEJAM & EARL 4



Article by: Carlos Nieto

Toejam & Earl is a video game series created by Toejam & Earl Productions, known before as Johnson Voorsanger Productions. The first game of the series came out in 1991 for the Sega Mega Drive and then saw two sequels, one again for the Sega Mega Drive in 1991 and the other for the Microsoft Xbox in 2002. Both of them had tons of changes done in the end, due to publishers, so the games weren't really similar at all to the first game. Due to poor sales of Toejam & Earl III, the studio disbanded and the rights stayed with Greg Johnson, who was one of the founders of the studio. Around the year 2007, Greg Johnson tried to pitch a fourth installment of the franchise for the Nintendo DS. Sadly this pitch was never more than that. Toejam & Earl for the Nintendo DS would have been a remake of the original Toejam & Earl game for the Sega Mega Drive, but adding features to take advantage of the new console. The biggest suggested feature was 4 player co-op gameplay. In the original, the screen would split when players got far away from one another, but with the Nintendo DS, every player would have their own screen, allowing them to get as far away as possible without the need of splitting the screen. There would also be a Download Play feature, allowing players without the cartridge the ability to play a part of the game cooperatively from someone with the cart. But if one wanted to play the full game cooperatively, each player would need their own cart. The game would take place in randomized levels made out of tiles, which would be seen on a map in the top screen, while the lower screen would hold an isometric view with the characters rendered in 3D with a cartoony look. Just like in the original, the levels would actually be stacked on top of one another, allowing the player to fall down and get separated from his teammates. The player would move around levels by pointing to a spot on the ground with the stylus, and if the player touched an object the character would interact with it. Presents were coming back as items that could help, or hurt, you, and like in the original game their looks would change every run. This, combined with the random levels, would make every playthrough completely different. The players could also high five with each other to share their lives and health, and if one player were to pick up a present with another player nearby both would share the effect. The only feature that would have been taken from the sequels was a rhythm mini game in which the player would tap on the bottom screen to obtain additional lives and presents. A Toejam & Earl game wouldn't be the same without its iconic style and this was a huge aspect even in the initial pitch. The characters were supposed to be as lively as ever, having special close ups of certain actions in the top screen. The music was to be done in an old school funk style, this being a truly important part of the series. While this game never passed the pitch phase, the franchise is still not dead. Greg Johnson, now with his own studio Humanature Studios, has successfully Kickstarted a sequel titled "Toejam & Earl: Back in the Groove". This sequel promises to stay true to the original and takes things from this pitch, like the 4 player multiplayer.

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Gamecube
Playstation 2
Xbox

Article by: Tony Peters

There is no denying Sega's place in the history of the sixth generation of video game consoles. The "little gray box that could" left an undeniable mark on the industry throughout the 28-month whirlwind (from November 1998 to March 2001) that it spent as an active market participant. Within that short time frame, Sega used the Dreamcast to usher in many facets of gaming that are still in use today, such as popularizing the current era of 3D sports games and establishing the basic expectations that console gamers should have for umbrella internet services (like Xbox Live and PSN) by making internet connectivity a standard console feature. No amount of success could override the company's upper management dysfunction, though. By the time the competition began popping up on the market, the Dreamcast had dug its grave and all but buried itself. Sony's PlayStation 2, Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube would spend the next five years clashing above its corpse, each occasionally stopping to pick fruit from the tree growing where Sega laid its last child to rest. In the end, the victory belonged to Sony. Actually, "achieving victory" may not be a powerful enough way to describe the PS2's run. Sony didn't simply win the sixth console generation - their second in a row, mind you. They walked so many victory laps, they were still going until the console's worldwide discontinuation in January 2013, one month before the announcement of the eighth generation console, the PS4. The PS2 went on to sell 155 million consoles worldwide; no other sixth generation console would reach even 30 million. Sony's reign started on March 4th, 2000, when the PS2 first hits store. Launching first in Japan, the PS2 wasted no time making its presence felt and went on to sell one million consoles on the first day. Autumn launch dates in North America and Europe were equally successful. One of the most enticing features to early adopters of the PS2 was the console's backward compatibility with the original PlayStation. Microsoft lacked a back catalog as a virgin console maker and Nintendo switched from cartridges to discs, so Sony was able to leverage the success of the PS1 to add thousands of existing games to its launch library in one fell swoop. By seamlessly connecting their first and second generation consoles, Sony built a gaming legacy in a fraction of the time. As successful as backwards compatibility was with gamers, that feature would not be the only one driving sales. Though not a wholly unique feature, the PS2's ability to play DVDs without additional equipment made it the first truly successful multimedia gaming console. Another contributing factor was that the cost of a standalone DVD player and the PS2's launch price of $300 were equivalent, making it a bargain for even the casual gamer looking to upgrade their home entertainment experience. DVD manufacturers followed suit, adorning their releases with "compatible with PS2" stickers - some even included console-exclusive extras. Microsoft and Nintendo both tried their hardest to compete with Sony, starting first with the House of Mario. After the Nintendo 64 came up short against Sony's PlayStation, 32.93 million consoles sold versus 102.49 million, Nintendo reevaluated their strategies. They had high hopes that with the GameCube they could restore their fading image and regain lost market share. After a successful launch, the GameCube was unable to sustain that momentum, and Nintendo would spend a significant amount of the sixth generation in last place: it went on to sell only 21.74 million consoles. Once again allowing arrogance to convince themselves that profitability from proprietary media was more important than the games on said media, Nintendo built the GameCube around their own mini-DVD format. These discs could only hold a fraction of the memory that a normal DVD could, making ports and multiple platform releases unnecessarily difficult. In attempts to divert attention from what the GameCube couldn't do compared to its competition, Nintendo introduced accessories and add-ons like the Game Boy Player (which allowed Game Boy games to be played on the TV), the GameCube to Game Boy Advance Link Cable, and broadband and dial up modems to drum up customer interest. While the GBA Player was a mild success, the others proved failures, especially the modems that would highlight Nintendo's inexperience with the internet. With Nintendo continuing to struggle in Sony's shadow, Microsoft's decision to enter the video game industry during the sixth generation was, in hindsight, brilliant timing. Launching first in North America on November 15th, 2001, the Xbox's 24 million consoles sold indicated a distant second place finish to the PS2. But by making some bold gambles on design, Microsoft changed the landscape of gaming while also planting the seeds for their seventh generation harvest. When Microsoft developed the Xbox, they did so by leveraging their expertise in PCs. Designed from the inside out, like a PC, the Xbox's built-in hard drive and integrated Ethernet port for broadband internet - firsts for the industry - became standard features moving forward. Microsoft debuted Xbox Live, a fee-based online gaming service, that not only enabled

gamers to download games, content and play games online, but allowed them to do so under a single umbrella for all games. With Sony leaving internet connectivity up to each developer to handle and Nintendo teasing internet plans that never happened, this was the real feather in the Xbox's cap. The reputation that the console gained for its easy to use, all-encompassing online gaming service continues to pay dividends now. Not every choice was so bold or fruitful, though. The console featured a full-sized DVD-ROM and hard drive, making it significantly larger and heavier than its competition, which hurt sales in countries such as Japan. The Xbox's original controller, lovingly nicknamed "The Duke," suffered from similar size issues. Finally, the Western sensibilities of the console and its library played well in Europe and North America, but failed to attract consumers in Asia, most notably in Japan. Regardless of which sixth generation console(s) that a gamer chose, they had access to a wide range of awe-inspiring, award-winning games. The PS2 gave birth to franchises such as Kingdom Hearts, God of War, Devil May Cry and Yakuza. It also boasted the first home of Metal Gear Solid 2, Grand Theft Auto 3 through San Andrea, and Guitar Hero, as well as cultivating sequels for Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest and Gran Turismo. Meanwhile, the GameCube ushered into the world Eternal Darkness, Metroid Prime, Pikmin and Super Monkey Ball while giving gamers new entries in the Mario, Zelda, Animal Crossing, Mario Kart and Smash Bros franchises. The Xbox brought the world Halo, Fable and Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, and was the exclusive console home to Far Cry, Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind and Doom 3. Cult titles and hidden gems available on this generation of consoles were games such as Phantasy Star Online: Episode I&II, Cubivore, Gotcha Force, Beyond Good & Evil, Viewtiful Joe, Chibi Robo, Killer7, Giftpia, Odama, Freak Out!, Breath Of Fire 5, Gitaroo Man, ZOE, Disaster Report, Katamari Damacy, The Red Star, Chulip, Demon Chaos, Monster Hunter, Global Defence Force, Mr. Moskeeto, R.A.D., Odin Sphere, Dual Hearts, Radiata Stories, Echo Night, Jet Set Radio Future, Panzer Dragoon Orta, Cronichle Of Riddik, SpikeOut: Battle Street, Otogi, Phantom Dust, Psychonauts, Kingdom Under Fire, Metal Wolf Chaos, Donkey Kong Jungle Beat, Freedom Fighters, Metal Arms, Baten Kaitos, ICO, Shadow of the Colossus, Shadow Of Destiny, Sky Gunner, God Hand, Okami, Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 & 4, Shadow Hearts: Covenant, Steambot Chronicles, Disgaea, Stubbs the Zombie, I-Ninja, Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath, Obscure and many, many more. The sixth generation will be forever remembered as a trend-setting generation. The innovations that console makers pursued during this time with regard to hardware, online and software discussions, not to mention in game development and design, are often taken for granted today. Sony may have won the competition to sell the most consoles, but gamers won when they were bestowed with a now-legendary library of games. With such a hyped and popular generation of consoles, easy port of games between Playstation 2 and Xbox, and a huge market to sell games to, developers planned to release thousands and thousands of games. Unfortunately though, a lot of them never came out. While 3D was already well tested with the previous generation, PS2, Xbox and GameCube games could boost new graphic effects, try new game play mechanics, take full advantage of double-analog controllers, create huge worlds to explore and offer proper online multiplayer to console gamers. This let to the conception of multiple ambitious and interesting games that were too ahead of their times or that were not supported by enough resources or team experience to be completed. In the following pages we'll take a look at one of the most fascinating generation of lost video games, through a series of promising or curious projects and lost sequels to classic titles.

1906: AN ANTARCTIC ODYSSEY

Article by: Jesse Cook, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

1906: An Antarctic Odyssey is one of those games with a long and complex development cycle that unfortunately did not go anywhere. Existing in what amounts to a few pieces of concept art as well as what appears to be an early sales demo created in 1998, An Antarctic Odyssey was an ambitious project that was postponed and reworked multiple times, before being cancelled due to various marketing reasons. Initially slated as a Playstation 2 game for release in 1999/2000, 1906 would have been a highly cinematic evolution of third-person action adventure games and the first title ever from french development studio Darkworks. As IGN describes in its brief synopsis of the game: "Borrowing inspiration from Jules Verne's Voyage to the Center of the Earth, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, From the Earth to the Moon, and Mysterious Island, 1906 was an arctic adventure game from the same team that developed Alone in the Dark. Also known as U.S.S. Antarctica and Lost Mantis, the game was part of an epic action-adventure trilogy mixing fear and romance in a unique science-fiction and fantasy setting. The game thrusts players into a disaster movie, giving them a sense of emergency, panic, and stress. Taking control of two heroes, players must fight to survive the horrors and enemies that come before them." Info about the development of the game is not completely clear, but it seems that Darkworks was not able to find a publisher interested in funding the project and it had to be put on hold. Their demo was still impressive enough to get the attention of Infogrames, who gave the studio a popular IP to work on; the result being Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare, released in 2001. After AitD, Darkworks wanted to try pitching their original IP again, so they took "1906: An Antarctic Odyssey" and changed some of its settings, characters and other aspects to make it more "marketable". The result was a new pitch for a game titled "U.S.S. Antarctica" (later renamed again into Lost Mantis), that seems to have been more action oriented than the original concept.

The new protagonists would still have been a man and a woman (with a romantic relationship), but with a more "mature sci-fi" style than the original couple. Concept art for 1906 had a more interesting fantasy / steampunk style, with the male character holding a relatively large flamethrower-type handgun (with accompanying fuel pack, steam gauges and all) and sporting a pair of welding glasses along with traditional arctic outerwear. The new characters instead looked more like generic soldiers from a Halo game, probably because Darkworks wanted to attract publishers with something that had a more proven art-style. Somehow, that change worked: Capcom was impressed, and in 2002 / 2003 they greenlighted the project and trademarked it under the "Lost Mantis" name, with plans to publish it for PS2 and Xbox. The only video available for Lost Mantis / U.S.S. Antarctica shows a cinematic action sequence which depicts the two main characters' escape from a submerged (sinking?) research facility while they run from what appear to be humanoid soldiers that wield automatic weapons (perhaps laser rifles). The pursuing enemies look essentially human, though they do have exaggerated limbs that appear more lanky and wiry. They also wear full face masks, which look ominous and very high-tech. As with the rest of this mysterious project, we have to speculate that the facility would have also been at some point overrun by sci-fi / horror creatures. Unfortunately, not even this version of the game made it. We don't know what happened between Capcom and Darkworks, but after a while the publisher dropped Lost Mantis. Some more speculations tell how the game was re-worked and re-

pitched again to Namco as a squad based FPS under the Time Crisis IP, but we don't really know if it was related in any way to the original 1906 pitch. In any case, Time Crisis Adventure was never officially announced and was soon cancelled too. In 2005, Darkworks was able to release another game, the survival horror Cold Fear, published by Ubisoft. Set aboard the Bering Sea on a Russian whaling ship, players took control of U.S. Coast Guard Tom Hansen as he attempted to survive attacks from both human and non-human enemies alike. While Cold Fear attempted to fit in with Capcom's most recent Resident Evil game at the time (Resident Evil 4), it still shares a few similarities with Lost Mantis' original thematic concept. Cold Fear carried over components of the setting, replacing the Antarctic landscape with the frigid waters of the Bering Sea; along with the sci-fi horror element, though Cold Fear's zombification inducing creatures look akin to Ridley Scott's Xenomorph facehuggers from Alien. Also, the game abandoned the early futuristic sci-fi setting for a contemporary era. Edge magazine from March 2005 had a big "Chill Factor" article, previewing Darkworks then upcoming Cold Fear. Antonie Villette (Cold Fear's director) was asked about USS Antarctica: "I think the USS Antarctica project was a bit too much ahead of it's time (it still is, by the way). The concept was clearly more complex and less understandable. That said, we also had to experiment a lot and build many prototypes to make Cold Fear possible. It's true that the USS Project missed this investigation Project."

Between 2005 and 2007, Darkworks worked on the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 title I Am Alive, which was later moved away from them by Ubisoft to be finished at their Shanghai branch in 2012. After they were dumped by Ubisoft, Darkworks tried again to find funds by creating a new game pitch called Black Death (Windows, Xbox 360, PS3), but even if they released a public playable demo to fuel interest by gamers, they did not find a publisher. In about 15 years of activity (from 1998 to 2012) Darkworks worked on dozens of projects, but they were only able to successfully complete and release 2 games. This was not enough to survive: in 2011 Darkworks was filed under Compulsory Liquidation and had to close down. Part of the company does still exist through its partnership with TriOviz, which produces stereoscopic 3D conversion software. The technology developed by the company has been used in numerous games including: Batman: Arkham Asylum, Batman: Arkham City, and Gears of War 3. We tried many times to get in contact with former Darkworks developers to know what happened to them and to all their lost games, but no one ever replied to our emails: it seems like the world will never know more about the mystery behind their slow and unfortunate collapse.

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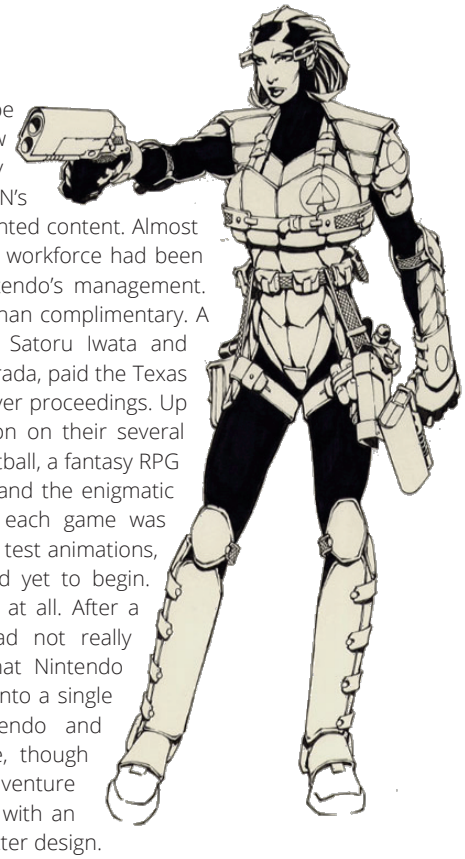
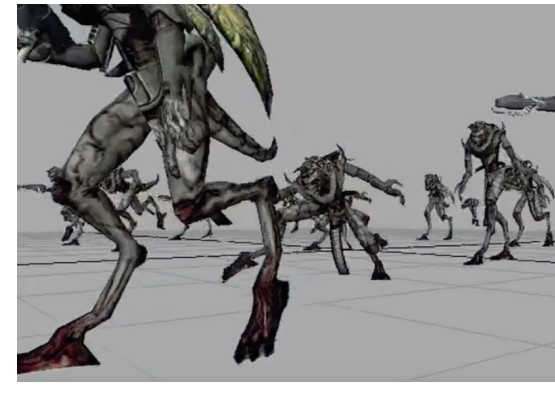
ACTION ADVENTURE

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Simply nicknamed "Action Adventure," this cancelled GameCube project was one of the first concepts ever created by the now popular team Retro Studios, when they were founded by Nintendo under the mission statement of complimenting the big N's line-up for their "next gen" Dolphin console with more adult-oriented content. Almost immediately following its establishment in 1998, Retro Studios's workforce had been split into 4 teams to work on pitches to be delivered to Nintendo's management. Unfortunately the first impressions of Retro's efforts were less than complimentary. A few months into 2000, Shigeru Miyamoto, a pre-presidency Satoru Iwata and Nintendo of America's then senior director of production, Tom Prada, paid the Texas studio a visit to check on their progress and cast a critical eye over proceedings. Up until this point, Retro had been engaged with conceptualisation on their several projects in the works. There was their sport game NFL Retro Football, a fantasy RPG named Raven Blade, a car combat project titled Thunder Rally and the enigmatic sci-fi Action Adventure. When NCL's juggernauts descended, each game was submitted as a 3 page design document with early material (e.g. test animations, drawings, incomplete engine work etc.) as full prototyping had yet to begin. Miyamoto and the others did not like what they saw at Retro at all. After a couple of years working on those concepts, the studio had not really developed much and the quality was still far away from what Nintendo wanted to have from such a team. To refocus Retro resources into a single game, all previous games were soon cancelled by Nintendo and unfortunately details on these projects are sparsely available, though some materials were leaked online over the years. Action Adventure seems to have been one of the less-bad games in the bunch, with an interesting setting, a quite-solid 3D engine and interesting character design.

It was set to be a sci-fi themed third person (and later first person) action game, featuring three intensely sexualised female protagonists in tight-fitting space suits, fighting an onslaught of insect-like aliens and futuristic neo-nazi villains (with artwork drawn by former Retro's concept artist Arnie Jorgensen). As the project never entered into full production, its gameplay was only conceptualized by Retro's team at the time, but we can assume that if it would ever have been completed, it could have played similar to a more combat / action oriented version of Metroid Prime. Action Adventure's settings and female protagonists are probably the reason why it is commonly thought that the game was somehow 'reworked' into Retro's first Metroid game; although, this is not entirely accurate. Miyamoto first suggested Retro work on a new Metroid in a separate discussion from 'Action Adventure'. It was later during his stateside trip that he would realise the potential for its "mature looking" 3D engine to be repurposed for such a game and suggest it be so. In the months that followed, Retro would do just that – modify the Action Adventure 3D engine to accommodate for what was, at the time, going to be a Metroid third person shooter. In some of the earliest concepts created for Prime, you may notice a certain number of documents carry an unusual quirk about them. In one set of environment sketches, for instance, there is an inexplicable, recurring use of the word "monkey" to



label rooms and features. Examples of this include the 'Incinerator Drone' boss, which is tentatively dubbed 'monkeyFlamethrower'. What's perhaps even stranger is that the filename designated to its music theme in the game is 'rui_monkeylower'. The reason behind such funny naming was revealed by a former Retro Studios employee, saying that "BloodMonkey" was the name of a character in Action Adventure before it was canned to work on Metroid. It seems that the team that was working on the canned prototype reused some of its level designs and early assets for Prime or at least that they kept the name as a memento from their original, lost concept. Being canned in an early alpha stage, we will probably never see much more from Action Adventure, but it has to be remembered as the one project that mostly contributed to the birth of Samus Aran's first 3D adventure ever. Today, Retro Studios is one of the most respected and popular teams working on Nintendo platforms and it's even more fascinating to think about all the mess and unfinished projects that they left behind from the early years of their existence.

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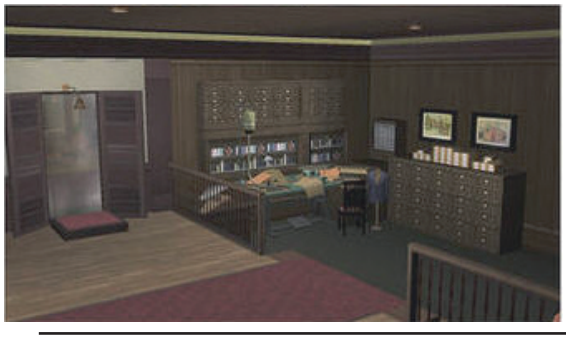
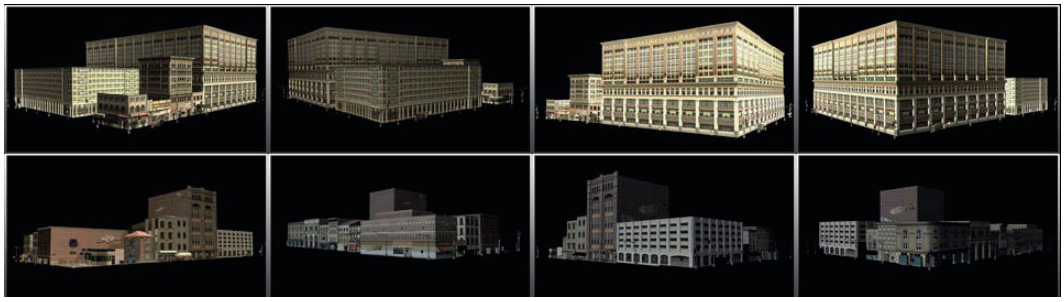
AGENT

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Agent was a cancelled action / open world sandbox style game that was in development in 2003 by Rockstar San Diego, planned to be published for PlayStation 2 and the original Xbox. Before being bought by Take-Two Interactive in November 2002, R* San Diego was known as Angel Studios and they released many different open world racing games, such as Midtown Madness, Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club. Agent would have been one of the studio's first projects with their new name, along with Midnight Club 2, and their first third person open world game, before they released Red Dead Revolver in 2004. The team was able to create an early playable prototype with a few missions. We can assume that the project could have been similar to Rockstar Games' main series, Grand Theft Auto, but with a "James Bond" setting, as the main character would have been a special agent, as the title suggests. In an old resume from one of the developers that worked in the Agent team, we read that some of them flew overseas to Cairo (Egypt) to take photos and gather references for the game. We don't know if the whole game would have been played in Cairo, as the few screenshots leaked from the early prototype show a series of buildings that look more like a traditional American city, so we can speculate that players would have been able to explore more than one city, following different missions in different countries of the world. In August 2003 Rockstar San Diego posted a series of new job offers to find developers that could have been hired to work on Agent as Environment Artists, Vehicle Artists, Lighting Artists, Animators, Interface Artists and Texture Artists. Unfortunately trying to contact former Rockstar San Diego developers hired in 2003 had no results, as it seems that R* made all staff that were involved with the game to sign strict non-disclosure agreements. This game vanished without even being officially announced and maybe we'll never know the truth behind it. One of the possible speculations is that Rockstar San Diego had to shift resources from Agent to finish Red Dead Revolver and Table Tennis. This would have been the end of the story for Agent if something enigmatic had not happened: in 2007 Sony made an exclusive partnership with Rockstar and their North





team (the people behind the main Grand Theft Auto series), to develop a new ambitious open world action game for PS3 set in the late 1970s Cold War. This new project was also titled Agent and it would "take players on a paranoid journey into the world of counter-intelligence, espionage, and political assassinations" creating a much different setting from the ones seen in GTA titles. When Agent was officially announced at E3 2009, Sam Houser (founder of Rockstar) told Gamespot that "Agent is a game we have wanted to make for a long time. The team in Edinburgh is doing an amazing job combining intense action, atmosphere, and story in a great period setting to create something that feels quite unique. We cannot wait for people to experience this game." Even if Agent by Rockstar North was announced many years ago, the game was never released for PS3 and as of mid-2015 it's not released for any console yet, even if R* still have the official Agent website online with a funny "coming soon" text. The title was also listed many times in different developer's resumes and in mid-2013, Take-Two registered two new trademarks for the game, but they have never shown any official screenshots or videos from the game. Will Agent ever be released for the current generation of consoles and PC? We don't know yet, we also don't even know if this new version of Agent could be somehow related to the lost Agent by Rockstar San Diego, but one thing is clear: R* should probably not name their project with that name again, as it seems it brings them bad luck.

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B.C.

Article by: Andrew Borman

B.C. is a third person action adventure caveman game taking place in a prehistoric world in which dinosaurs and humans both inhabit the environment at the same time. Development by Intrepid Games and Lionhead Studios started prior to the launch of the Xbox, with the earliest technology tests running on Xbox Alpha hardware, before being moved to final development hardware. The game was initially revealed at the Microsoft event X01 in October 2001 in France, along with other notable titles like Lionhead's own Project Ego, which was eventually released as Fable in September 2004. At the time only a single, heavily-edited screenshot for B.C. was released to the public, showing a larger-than-life tyrannosaurus rex along with cavemen. Players would have been able to control the environment, changing the migration and breeding habits of the dinosaurs. Villages and settlements could be created, with remnants of the other tribes assimilating into your own. Weapons could be crafted, and fire controlled, to better help your tribe survive. Five large areas could be tamed

by the player, with the goal of arriving in a safe haven by the end of the game. A volcano loomed constantly on the horizon, with the player eventually venturing inside. Dinosaurs could not go extinct by the time the game was canceled, but a bigger threat than the dinos were the simians, an ape-like race that could spell doom for the player's tribe and we could fail to reach safety if the simians proved to be too much. The game went through multiple revisions prior to its cancellation in late 2004. At e3 2002, B.C. was showcased to the gaming press in a behind-closed-doors scripted demo played by Peter Molyneux and other Intrepid Games staff. This scripted demo started in a cave at the top of a valley, giving the player a bird's eye view of the valley below. The demo then cuts to a caveman in the valley. The employee controlling the demo received a small vibration in the controller when there was an event that could be trigger using the black button, as very little gameplay had been implemented into the game by the time of the event. A small settlement could be visited, which had non-playable characters seemingly carrying out tasks like cooking all while children were chased between tents. A pterodactyl could swoop down just above the player. Dinosaurs and even mice could be seen running through the fields, with one scripted event triggering a t-rex to eat a caveman. Unfortunately, no real interaction was available with the dinosaurs, so while they looked nice, nothing was actually happening. Despite seeming like a naturally-played demo, all events needed to be triggered by the employee playing the game. By the X02 event held in Seville, Spain in September 2002, the game had begun to take shape, but was still only shown behind closed doors. The demo shown at this event took place at a beach, and allowed the tribe to work together to take down dinosaurs, and allowed for exploration through a nearby cave system. Food could be gathered from dinosaurs and trees climbed, but it was clear that the gameplay was still very early. At e3 2003, the game was again showed to the gaming press, with even more functionality in a brand new environment. This demo, while still lacking any mission structure, did allow for varied player classes, such as hunting, building, and a bow-and-arrow user who could light their weapon on fire or even poison the arrows. Instead of simply watching the t-rex eat a caveman, players could now hunt the t-rex, in an encounter that needed multiple cavemen to cooperate and kill the beast. Around this time, Intrepid began piecing together a demo labeled the 'first playable demonstration,' which put all of the elements together with a loose mission structure. In the demo, the player could assist the remaining members of the Wush-eet tribe by first gathering food for them, and then by gathering a fire stone. In doing so, a camp would be established, with the Wush-eet joining the player's tribe. This demo debuted the map, showing the populations of dinosaurs along with their access to water and food, and spans a large area. It also showed the game's weather feature, as a heavy storm moves in after the camp is established. This demo also introduced a combo system to help enhance the fighting mechanic. Despite the vast progress that was made, much more work was needed on the game to find the right balance.

In December of 2003, Ben Cousins, who was the Lead Designer on the project, left Intrepid, with Alex Cummings taking over. In a questions and answer section provided with Microsoft's e3 2004 press kit, the company sought to put the public at ease about the project after Cousins' departure, although B.C. had, at some point, slipped to an unknown 2005 release target. While large changes were still being considered on B.C., a sequel, which would reportedly have Xbox Live support of some kind, was also confirmed in July 2004. It seemed as though the project would be wrapping up soon. Work had continued on B.C. until October 2004, when the project came to a screeching halt as Peter Molyneux posted on Lionhead's website indicating that work had been suspended on B.C.. No official reason has ever been given as to why the project was canceled. No other titles were released by Intrepid Games, and many members of the team moved to Lionhead and other Microsoft owned studios. While B.C. remains at the top of many canceled games lists, Microsoft has stayed quiet about any potential revivals.

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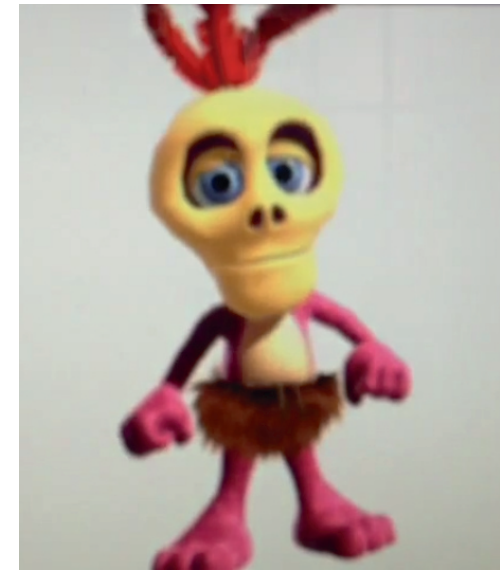
BANJO X

Article by: Karl Gutierrez, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Banjo X was to be the third installment to the Banjo Kazooie franchise, slated to be released for the original Xbox. Initially the game was being developed in 2004 by Rare as a straight remake of the first game, with enhanced graphics and gameplay for the new console. Supposedly, the characters in Banjo X were to break the 4th wall, so to speak, and gradually become aware that the game was a remake of the original Nintendo 64 version. The farther along the player got in the game, the more things would shift directions from the original Banjo Kazooie. It would have been at this point when the characters would become aware that they were in a remake of the original game and attempt to alter the plot in a different way. Rare had already experimented with the remake of Conker's Bad Fur Day, adding a few different situations in the early parts of the game to surprise players who knew the original version, it seemed only right to expand a similar concept in Banjo X. The world found out about this lost game in late 2011 / early 2012 when Xbox executable files (dated June 2004) for a title named "Banjo X" were found on an old Xbox development kit. These files were missing many of the characteristic that would have been needed to run the prototype, but someone managed to break them open and find some clues. Unfortunately, the game doesn't do much when attempting to access it. Depending on the file launched, a black command screen will pop up, showing files missing and an error message. It was expected that the game wouldn't work due to these missing assets, but the fact that it boots shows that something was being worked on at some point. One user was able to extract an early 3D model of Mumbo. Names for new Banjo abilities and items were also discovered in these executable files. Some of these include: Springy Shoes, Rocket Sneakers, Metal Feathers,

Aviator Goggles, Invisibility Chocolates, Big Feathers, Bag of Eggs, and Diamond Beak. During Banjo X's development, the idea of having Gruntilda and Banjo attempting to accomplish the same task at the same time was attempted. Gregg Mayles wanted Gruntilda to interfere with Banjo during gameplay and make things much harder for the player. However, the team at Rare thought the idea would have required a very complex AI in order for it to do what they wanted. This concept was quickly scrapped after this realization. Even though the game supposedly didn't get very far into development, Steve Mayles tweeted out early character models he made for Banjo X. One was Mr. Termite, and the other was Conga. Designer Ed Bryan also tweeted out a rendition of a reimagined Mumbo, made around 2004. Steve Mayles also confirmed in a twitter response that he remembers seeing a 4 player co-op mode during Banjo X's development. It was during this time that a separate team at Rare began working on a Mario Kart style game with the Banjo Kazooie IP, under the name "Banjo Kazoomie". The major concept that made it stand out was the fact that the player was able to build their own vehicle to use. As you will read below, Banjo Kazoomie didn't get very far in development but many of its ideas were later reused in Nuts & Bolts. According to designer Gregg Mayles, "Rare thought this would be a "hard sell,", and that "players would expect a whole new game". It was clear that there were not many reasons to continue working on Banjo X for the original Xbox and the team soon moved their plans to the new Xbox 360. The new Banjo game would have been a completely different game and Rare began brainstorming ideas of how players traveled in platformers. They wanted to make the trip to the overall objection as fun as possible. This is when they decided to combine the Banjo Kazoomie idea with the worlds for Banjo X. The team only got as far as the first level and as soon as vehicles became incorporated with the game, Mumbo's Mountain had to be altered to a much larger size in order to have proper usage of the vehicles. Unfortunately, the interesting idea of a breaking-the-4th-wall remake with multiplayer coop for Banjo Kazooie never saw the light of day. But in the end, Rare was still able to release a third entry in the Banjo series with Nuts & Bolts, even if feedback from the fans was mixed.

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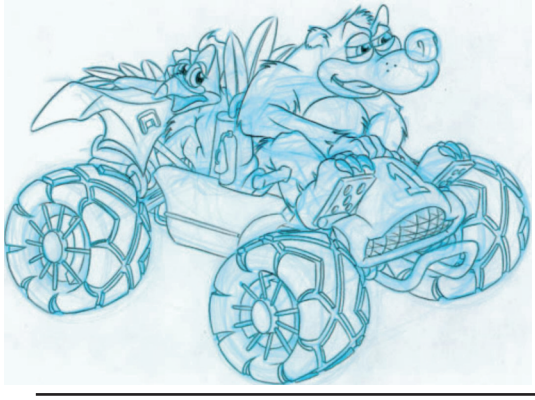
BANJO-KAZOOMIE



Article by: Matt Soulia

In today's gaming landscape, few series can claim the legendary status of games like Banjo. A platforming game centering around a bird and bear duo, Banjo-Kazooie, and its sequel, Banjo-Tooie, are amongst some of the most fun games ever made. Its popularity was so great that fans clamored for years for a sequel, eventually getting what they wanted when Rare was acquired by Microsoft. The long awaited sequel, Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts for the Xbox 360, was unfortunately a case of "careful what you wish for". Even with some interesting features,

the game was largely panned by fans and critics, and has since caused the bear and bird heroes to again go on hiatus. Between the time of Banjo-Tooie and Nuts & Bolts, we come across the story of a little prototype known as Banjo-Kazoomie. Developed in 2004 after the release of Grabbed by the Ghoulies on the original Xbox, Banjo-Kazoomie was to be a kart-racing game, similar Mario Kart. The reason for this, according to Rare's Brendan Gunn, was simply from a desire to create a racing game, something he always wanted to do. Kazoomie would have been very unique from other racers at the time. The game would allow players to swap out different pieces and build their own over-the-top vehicles to race with. Unfortunately, Banjo-Kazoomie only made it to the prototype phase after about two weeks of work and initial concept design, before the small team was moved to help the development of Kameo, at the time still planned to be released on the original Xbox. When Kameo was moved to the Xbox 360, Brendan and the rest of the Kazoomie team had to follow too and they were never able to work again on their Xbox racing game. Only a few pieces of artwork from the project managed to find their way online. Even if Kazoomie was never completed, its interesting concept of building crazy vehicles was reused in the following Banjo game: Nuts & Bolts. That was not the only legacy that Kazoomie left at Rare's office, as the title of the ill-fated Xbox prototype was reused a few more times for different projects. Another racing game was sometimes referred to as "Banjo-Karting" or "The Fast and the Furriest". This other game was also cancelled and you can read more about it in a dedicated article in the Xbox 360 section of this book. Banjo-Kazoomie may have never seen public release, but it's influence in Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts and in other lost games assures its spot in gaming history. Even with just a bunch of art and info available, the game has weaved an impressive legacy for an ill-fated, two week prototype and fans of the old Rare can still dream about how a racing game by the early-2000 Rare could have played.

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CITIZEN ZERO (BIG WORLD)

Article by: Jesse Cook

Citizen Zero, also known as Big World: Citizen Zero, is a third-person action MMO created by Australian game developer Micro Forte Studios. The game, slated for release in the early 2000s for PC and the Xbox and then later the Xbox 360, is based on a futuristic penal colony that eventually became a free society on the planet Typhron. Named Neo-Eden, the colony stands as an allusion to the world after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. However, it appears that much like later games such as Bioshock and Bioshock Infinite, which play with the ideas of Ayn Randian social morality in the face of audacious scientific discovery, the idea of free will in Citizen Zero is a questionable quality rather than a defined punishment or gift based on crimes committed, as the player's character is a freed prisoner who has had their mind wiped of all past memories. Much like the biblical reference the game is alluding to with both its title and premise, the freedom given to the player represents a blessing and a curse, as the player will be allowed to make their own decisions within the world, and is given freedom to explore the vast MMO world while their character technically has been

wiped of their former humanity. This could have posed very interesting questions for gamers had the company explored this concept throughout the entirety of the game, though at this point these mechanics are purely speculation. Players could choose from three distinct races and customize their character based on a specific class path, which can be assumed to fall into the realm of standard MMO games made today. Gameplay ranged from vehicular travel to real-time combat and hunting. Unlike popular contemporary MMOs such as World of Warcraft or Final Fantasy XIV, Citizen Zero relied on gun-based action, utilizing a third-person-shooter perspective (however, certain screenshots and brief clips from demo videos do show melee weapons). Though all MMOs are inherently conceptualized as cooperative games, Citizen Zero was particularly invested in players working as a team to take on the various quests meted out to the player. Players would either work within a clan or group, or be placed in AI controlled squads that would aid the player as he or she explored the three distinct worlds within the game. According to MMO website mmorpg.com, players could perform multi-stage takedowns and powerful combo attacks through special class abilities utilized in conjunction with their team. However, Citizen Zero's emphasis on teamwork extended beyond just combat situations. Players could work together to scale difficult terrain that would be impossible to traverse alone through cooperative maneuvers such as a boost/lift system. Paul McInnes and Simon Hayes, Senior Game Designer and Chief Technical Officer respectively for Citizen Zero, describe the game as more an action adventure game rather than a traditional MMO. The goal was to capture more of the action-shooter sensation of excitement and thrill when entering combat, rather than simply spamming the same button command until combatants were killed. McInnes and Hayes define it as "high interactivity," related to situational opportunities, that "play like a real action game... set in a big persistent universe." Along with a strong focus on combat, the team also intended to include racing leagues based on the vehicles players could obtain in the game. Footage from a demo of Citizen Zero shows a single-passenger "Ripper" vehicle gliding over a sprawling valley littered with large craggy boulders at high speeds, which could have led to some exciting competitive opportunities for players interested in dynamic gameplay opportunities within the MMO realm. In terms of aesthetics, Citizen Zero is akin to contemporary sci-fi games of its time such as Halo: Combat Evolved. Micro Forte blended the scenic beauty of natural landscapes, using lush rolling green hills populated with wandering creatures such as the raptor inspired Striffs, to off-set the more industrial and synthetic human territories scattered throughout the game. Players could wander through rich wooded areas or ancient stone temples only to find an austere metal structure, classified as a frontier depot, jutting out from the organic scenery, slate black against the washed cool colors of the grass or stone. These details emphasize the Edenic qualities of the world while

spotlighting the human influence on the planet. This same idea was used by Bungie in Halo to give players a sense of wonder and awe at the natural grandeur of the world, which made the incredibly futuristic man-made structures more distinct and recognizable. Micro Forte also seems to have drawn influences from games such as Jet Force Gemini as well as The Elder Scrolls series. Based on the few screenshots available, it looks like Micro Forte was aiming to blend the sci-fi and fantasy elements of various MMOs/RPGs to craft a world both technologically advanced while firmly set in its own distinct natural history. According to an IGN article by Douglas C Perry, Micro Forte cancelled Citizen Zero in 2007, citing progress on "a new as-of-yet unnamed spy-themed MMO" as the cause of cancellation. In the article, Perry quotes McInnes who states that, "'although we were sad to stop working on CZ [Citizen Zero], we are extremely excited about the progress of our spy project.'" The aforementioned spy project is presumably Super Spy Online, a game that appears to have never been released. A brief description of the game on Micro Forte's website indicates that it was prized for "smoothly combining fast paced gun-play with the stealth style game play of an espionage agent, in a massively multi-player environment." According to the copyright date on the webpage, it appears that this MMO prototype was created in 2008, but never released. While it may appear that Micro Forte studios was on the decline after the failed attempt at Citizen Zero, the company is actually still in operation and relevant to modern MMOs. Though the company has not produced any new games since Citizen Zero and Super Spy Online, they do provide many MMO games with the BigWorld engine. The engine, originally created for Citizen Zero, now serves as a platform for games such as World of Tanks and Realm of the Titans, among a long list of others. Although Micro Forte never brought to fruition either one of their ambitious MMOs, they still play an important role in contemporary video game development.

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CRANK THE WEASEL

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Originally announced at E3 2002, Crank the Weasel was a platform / adventure game that was in development by Midway San Diego for PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox. The game's look and feel were inspired by 1920's American cartoon art style with a humorous / mature twist, similar to Conker's Bad Fur Day, with a soundtrack influenced by big band swing music. The Crank team wanted to create open-ended gameplay, in which players would have been able to freely explore the levels, interact with funny / strange Non Playable Characters and try different ways to complete the game's objectives. The main goal of Crank was to create chaos in the game's world spreading lies and making mischief, playing enemy gangs off against each other, going to Strip Clubs, and stealing loot from NPC's (and then reselling it to other NPCs), to be able to get enough money and "Big-Ticket-Items" to reach the city airport and fly to the fabled Pleasure Island. Interaction with NPCs and gangs would have been particularly complex, as when Crank would successfully steal a Big-Ticket-Item from them, they would have started to roam the level seeking vengeance, cash and even another BTI from other NPCs, fighting amongst themselves. To have a better idea about the surreal action that could have been happened in Crank the Weasel, a former Midway developer remembered that "There was even a

licensed Benny Hill song that played during the rabies power up, which Crank would use to infect his beastly opponents in a festive, animal-biting chain reaction across the level". More details about the gameplay and the peculiar world of Crank can still be found on the website of Brian Silva, Co-creator and Lead Designer of the project: "At the beginning of a game, each NPC possesses a preliminary set of "ideal" characteristics, meaning that they will go about their business, acting and functioning in an initially "composed" manner appropriate for their personality type. However, depending upon Weasel's player-controlled actions (as well as the independent actions of the NPCs), these "ideal" characteristics will soon begin to alter as they are manipulated in a vast variety of ways that can either benefit or work against the player, and often provide surprising results. NPCs, while going about their business, will even change their own behaviour to suit their immediate needs even if Weasel does not interact with them, resulting in amusing and varied gameplay. Basically, each playfield would naturally evolve on its own, Weasel just happens to throw a huge wrench into the equation." "Strip clubs are tucked-away somewhere in every 3rd level (one in Downtown, one in Midtown & one in Uptown). Weasel is seated at a little front row table. Weasel has a minimal amount of control while the performers are onstage. Each show always concludes with Weasel being thrown out just before the peeler's "big finish". Each peeler performs a suggestive burlesque routine (fan dance, umbrella dance, Rockette) while Weasel watches from his stage-side table. Weasel, along with the rest of the crowd goes wild for the peelers. Each peeler will perform a routine that starts out mild (demure & conservative) but finishes wild (suggestive & scantily clad). The last stage of a peeler's routine will have her teetering on the edge of "showing it all" (a few strategically positioned fans or half-closed umbrellas are all that remain). Just as the peeler is about to "take it all off" the stage curtain lowers and the spotlights go out." A great example of one the weird levels that players would have been able to explore in the game, is the Hell area: "While floating along the River Styx, Weasel can hear the merry tune of Jingle Bells echoing throughout the fiery pits of hell, snow is drifting, trees are decorated, lights are hung, and all the little devils want to wish Weasel a "Merry Christmas!" Gnarled and twisting tree roots wrap and wind from above and all throughout this town of torment. Little demons drive their little demon cars, walk their demon dogs, and mow their demon lawns in front of their little demon houses. Elevators transport a nonstop supply of unrighteous heathens to the hoary underworld to suffer an abundance of dreadful eternities. Weasel will be glad to know that there are hundreds of takeout restaurants in hell... unfortunately they're all Chinese takeout, and the only available places of business are either the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Internal Revenue Service, Health Food stores, Social Security

Departments, jury duty registration, or fabric stores. But on the bright side, there's plenty of flashy advertising for products and places that these sinners will never have a chance to enjoy." It's easy to understand how Crank the Weasel's premises could have been the basis for an amusing and mature action game, but unfortunately it was officially cancelled in 2003 after 2 years of development, as the team was not able to establish all of the interesting concepts into a fun game to play. Midway decided to switch resources to other projects like a new 3D Gauntlet (that was later released in 2005 as Gauntlet: Seven Sorrow), a series with a consolidated gameplay and popular IP that would have been much easier to develop and sell to the market. After many years of economic issues and mass-layoffs, in early 2009 Midway announced their reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. In August 2009 Midway San Diego and all its assets were officially sold to THQ, while many of their employees were fired or offered different positions at the new studio. Not many people from the original Crank team were still at Midway when this happened, as many of them had already left in mid-2003 and 2004, to work at different companies like Blizzard Entertainment, Electronic Arts, Sony Online Entertainment, Blur studio, Jailed Games and Studio Gigante. We don't know if any asset or playable demo of Crank the Weasel could still be hidden away on some old hard disc in ex-THQ San Diego archives, but we can only hope to preserve more of this lost game in the future.

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DEAD PHOENIX

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Dead Phoenix was a video game that was supposed to be released for the Nintendo GameCube. It was announced as one of the Capcom Five, a set of five Capcom-developed games originally planned as GameCube exclusives, with the other four games being Resident Evil 4, Killer7, P.N.03, and Viewtiful Joe. Dead Phoenix, however, failed to make an appearance at E3 2003 and was subsequently removed from Capcom's website and release schedule. As for the other four, only P.N.03 remained a GameCube exclusive. The other three games were all eventually ported to the PlayStation 2. Very little is actually known about Dead Phoenix. The game was cancelled before sufficient development had taken place, so details regarding the story and gameplay are very scarce. Additionally, it was never shown in playable form. It was to be a 3D shoot 'em up, similar to Panzer Dragoon, featuring a winged man named Phoenix. Players would take control of the protagonist as he flew around shooting massive enemies, with the aid of allies on foot. It was said to be set in a somewhat mythical world, full of demons and dragons on a flying island that was constantly evolving and changing. The trailer certainly generated its share of attention. The main

character appeared to fight alongside other troops, destroying hordes of monsters and gigantic bosses (which resembled giant lizards and dragons). The hero's arm also appeared to continually morph into different forms of an energy cannon, eventually transforming him into a phoenix. Players had absolute control of the protagonist; they could even lower themselves down to the ground, and weren't limited by predetermined routes. According to Capcom, the main goal of the game was to allow players to "freely fly like a bird into a world of epic proportions." They wanted the flying controls to be so good that players could feel feel the wind beneath their wings. Although the game was cancelled, rumours of it being brought back into development are common within some circles of gamers. One rumor that has become infamous is IGN's theory of Dead Phoenix being the next generation of Kid Icarus. This began with an article covering GameCube rumours, and a statement from the game's producer, who called it Little Phoenix. After all, the similarities between the now-dead game and the popular Nintendo franchise are irrefutable - Dead Phoenix's angelic character would be the perfect fit for a Kid Icarus game, and although its dark, edgy style would seem a little "too much" for a Nintendo game (especially after Kid Icarus Uprising's humorous tone), it could result in an interesting title. Why was this title cancelled? There are quite a few theories floating around. The main reason, though, could be that GameCube sales weren't as high as both Capcom and Nintendo hoped, which was the reason why their exclusivity agreement was eventually ended. The only game that stayed exclusive to the GameCube was P.N.03, and that particular game wasn't ported to other consoles only because it was critically panned and didn't sell very well. While fans have hoped for a continuation of the Dead Phoenix project, Capcom has refused to comment on the possibility of a resurrection. As further confirmation of the game's demise, the trademark in the United States Patent and Trademark Office was listed as "Abandoned-Failure To Respond Or Late Response" in 2004. Therefore, it is unlikely Capcom will ever return to the project.

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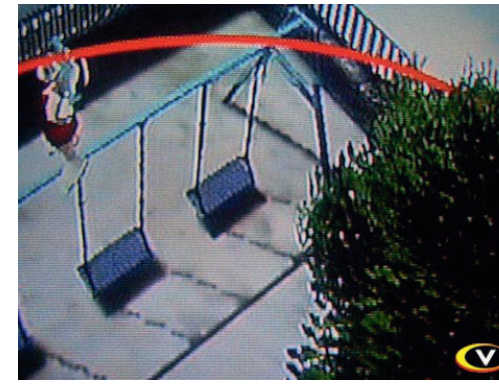
DENSEN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

DenSen (meaning 'electric wire' in Japanese) was one of the first titles ever announced in the late '90s by Sony for their new PlayStation 2 and scheduled to be released in spring 2000, but in the end it vanished without any official statement. The project was in development internally by SCEJ and it looked like a really original game. A little school girl would walk around and ride on electricity power wires with a coat hanger, to explore a floating, surreal Japanese town, in which along with traditional houses and streets we can notice a huge housewife dancing with her bag on a flying island. From the only video ever released on a demo CD published along with Japanese PlayStation 2 magazine PLUS



(October 1999) we can see that players would have been able to follow branching directions that would have taken the game's protagonist to different parts of the city, sprinting while hanging on power wires, somehow similar to grinding on wires in games like Jet Set Radio, or the most recent skyhooks in Bioshock Infinite. The main designer behind DenSen was Kiyoshi Sakai, a name that will probably remain unknown by most gamers, but that could seem vaguely familiar to some people that enjoyed such weird games as Umihara Kawase, as he is also the creator of this crazy platformer series. Starting from 1994 Umihara Kawase was published with a cult following on different consoles such as the SNES, PlayStation, Nintendo DS, PSP, Nintendo 3DS and PS Vita, but most of these titles were never released outside of Japan. The music played in the Densen demo video is one of the tracks from the original Super Nintendo version of Umihara. In Umihara Kawase players had to reach the end door in a series of short platforming levels, set in a floating, surreal world, with colourful blocks and strange fish with legs, trying to end as fast as possible. The most fun part of the gameplay is the fishing line / grappling hook used by the protagonist. This could help to move around the areas by clinging on walls, swinging from platform to platform, climbing by using the rope as an elastic and more, all moving with a realistic yet exaggerated physics that would permit hardcore gamers to create extraordinary stunts and to complete a level in a few seconds. This gameplay mechanic made Umihara Kawase a sort of "sandbox platformer" as there could be infinite ways to complete an area using the grappling hook and its exaggerated physics. By knowing how the Umihara Kawase series is played, we can assume that Kiyoshi Sakai would have offered something similar in DenSen, with the school girl that would have had to reach the ending of the level in the fasted and craziest way possible, using hanging on power wires instead of the grappling hook. In an interview with Sakai by Gosokkyu, they asked about DenSen to its creator that answered: "Densen is a title we planned while I was working at SCEJ. However, before we had spent the adequate time organizing all our ideas, it was pushed forward and announced. As a result, it ended up failing. It was an SCEJ title, so I don't know whether they have any plans to bring it back or not." Even if Densen was never released on the PlayStation 2, its weird premise influenced one of the strangest yet fun games of the "128 bit" generation: Katamari Damacy. Keita Takahashi (creator of Katamari) remembers that while working at Namco he saw that same DenSen video and it blows its mind: "The PS2 was released in Japan around the time I joined Namco, and there was a Sony launch game that I was excited about called Densen, but which got cancelled. In that game, you used coat hangers to slide along an electricity cable like a zip line, which I thought was a wonderful idea, because it's a twist on something you'd see in everyday life. I realised that the world around me could be in a game, and that had an effect on Katamari Damacy." As of late 2015, Kiyoshi Sakai is still working on videogames at Agatsuma Entertainment and their latest games were Code of Princess (3DS) and Sayonara Umihara Kawase (3DS and PS Vita).

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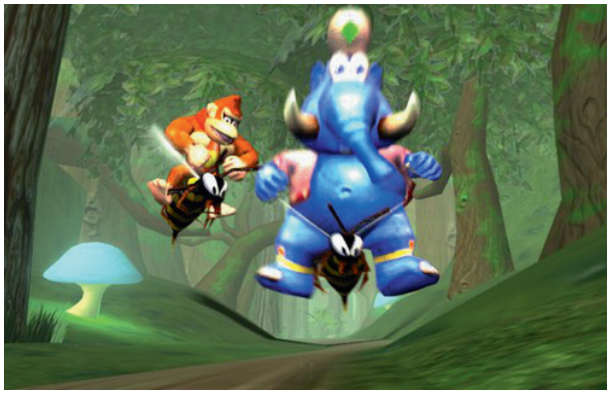
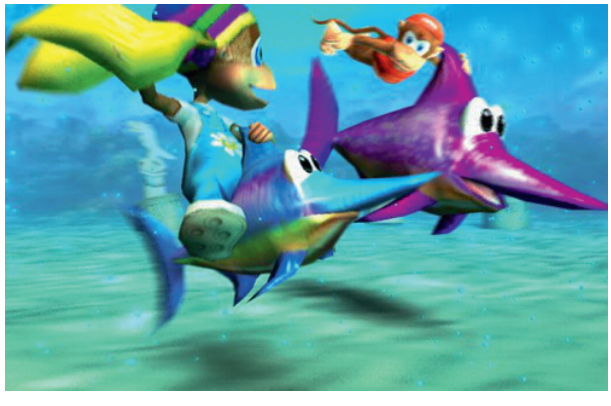
DONKEY KONG RACING





Article by: Sebastian Zavala

A tech demo for a Donkey Kong game on the GameCube was shown at Space World 2001. The game was called Donkey Kong Racing and showed various characters, including Donkey Kong, Diddy Kong, and Taj the Genie racing on Ellie, Expresso, Rambi, Enguarde, and Zinger. Presumably, there were additional characters such as Necky, Army, and Chomps Jr., who had been introduced in previous Donkey Kong games by Rare. The game was also shown at E3 2001, and featured a superb tongue-in-cheek parody of the speeder bike chase from Star Wars - Episode VI: Return of the Jedi. This project was going to be a spiritual sequel to Diddy Kong Racing for Nintendo 64. Sadly, following the sale of Rare to Microsoft in 2002, they announced that they were concentrating their efforts on Xbox games. Hence, these ended up being the game's only public appearances. Rideable creatures seen were Rambi (in regular, giant, small, and small-red variants), Enguarde the Swordfish (with a purple variant), Ellie the Elephant and some Zingers. Creatures rumored to be rideable include Expresso the Ostrich, a Chomps shark, a Necky and an Army. It is not known if all the characters from Diddy Kong Racing were going to reappear in this game, but with the inclusion of Taj, it seemed likely. The slogan for Donkey Kong Racing was "LET'S RIDE" as can be seen at the end of the trailer. It has been said that the Donkey Kong Racing concept was somehow ported to the original Xbox, minus the Nintendo characters. It was then that the game became known as Sabreman Stampede Racing (an IP which originates from the Stamper brothers' first development studio, Ultimate Play the Game), with the Sabre Wulf cast of characters. This Xbox version evolved into something more than just a racing game, and Diddy Kong Racing's "adventure style" was expanded. According to Lee Musgrave, lead designer of the project, "Over the course of the next 18 months or so, it went from being a track-based animal racer to a more open-world game with Tamagotchi-style features, in which nurturing your animal became a key mechanic." Sadly not much information is available on the subject, and in the end even the Xbox version was cancelled. An Xbox 360 port was started too, but never finished. "It was such a wide game in terms of content, and the development went off into the woods a little bit," Musgrave admits, "It took a long time to do, and at the same time we were trying to build engines for consoles we weren't familiar with." Some of the concepts of Sabremen Stampede 360 were reused as initial ideas for Banjo Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts. "It was a pure racing game", says Musgrave, "The underlying software mechanics were actually based on car physics, but it also incorporated the idea of riders jumping between different animals mid-race, to always be riding the ones that were bigger or faster... we had some awesome gameplay in place, and it was lots of fun – we even had a multiplayer version working – and when you fell off, you had to tap-tap-tap (HyperSports style) to run on foot and catch up with an animal. Fun, but it lost some appeal without the DK universe around it..." This was the most interesting new feature in the game, and surprisingly enough, it hasn't been replicated in any other project yet. The idea was to take the existing racing game concept of having multiple drivers and

vehicles (or, in this case, animals) with different characteristics (weight, size, speed, etc.) and apply it mid-game. It was to be different, fresh, and dynamic. "We tried to figure out what to do with it," Musgrave continues, "We made a prototype version for Xbox, but because nothing else had been made up until this point, we essentially built it from scratch." Originally, two sequels (or spiritual sequels) to Nintendo 64's Diddy Kong Racing were planned: Diddy Kong Pilot and Donkey Kong Racing. Diddy Kong Pilot eventually became Banjo-Pilot for the Gameboy Advance, a game based on Rare's Banjo-Kazooie. Even though Donkey Kong Racing was cancelled, Rare did manage to release one of their games on the Nintendo GameCube before switching to Microsoft consoles: Star Fox Adventures. Afterwards, they released a couple of games for the original Xbox: Grabbed by the Ghoulies and Conker: Live & Reloaded (a censored remake of Conker's Bad Fur Day for the Nintendo 64), before starting to work exclusively on their Xbox 360 titles.

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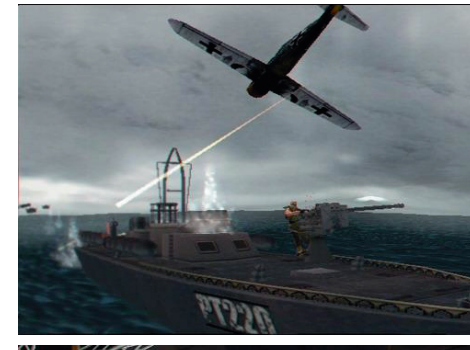
DUKE NUKEM: D-DAY

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Duke Nukem: D-Day (also known as Duke Nukem: Man of Valor) is a cancelled third-person shooter developed by n-Space and 3D Realms and planned to be published by Rockstar Games and Gathering of Developers for the PS2. After the success of Duke Nukem: Time to Kill (also developed by n-Space) on the first Playstation, 3D Realms and n-Space signed another collaboration in 1999, hoping to have a sequel to the game released in early 2000 as one of the first Playstation 2 titles on the American market. The project was designed as a third-person shooter where Duke Nukem traveled back in time to fight in various WW2 battles, facing both Nazi forces and Aliens along the way. Duke Nukem: D-Day development lasted for about 4 years, much longer than n-Space and 3D Realms ever planned. It seems that the team working on it experienced difficulties developing the game on the PS2, and in 2003 3D Realms decided to cancel it for "lack of sufficient progress." George Broussard (co-owner of Apogee Software and 3D Realms) described the game on the 3D Realms forums: "It was a PS2 game where Duke went back in time and was a key factor in all the major WW2 events, and helped turn the tide. Of course it was a kind of alternate reality and there were alien Nazi's. I wish that game had worked out because it would have been among the very first WW2 games to come out, before you saw one in a week." After failing with Duke Nukem: D-Day, n-Space successfully developed and released Geist for Nintendo's GameCube and GoldenEye: Rogue Agent for Nintendo's DS. Today the team is still around, and one of their latest projects was Sword Coast Legends, an RPG released in late 2015 for PC and PS4. A comic series titled Duke Nukem: Glorious Bastard was released in July 2011 by IDW, featuring Duke traveling back in time to the second World War to help the Allies defeat the Nazis and aliens, but it's not clear if it was inspired by the cancelled Duke Nukem: D-Day.

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FEAR EFFECT INFERNO

Article by: Sebastian Zavala, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Fear Effect Inferno is the unreleased third title in the Fear Effect series of action / survival horror games, developed by Kronos Digital Entertainment for the original PlayStation. Kronos was a US-based video game developer founded in 1992. They first garnered attention for their contract work for Sierra Online, most important was the innovative introduction sequence they created for King's Quest VI. They eventually began to develop original games, beginning with their visually stunning early 3D fighting games Criticom and Dark Rift. They are most famous, though, for their Fear Effect games that gained a cult following of fans. Inferno was originally announced as a sequel to the first game (Fear Effect 2 being the prequel to the original), and was in development for the PlayStation 2 from 2001, with the first images and trailer released during the 2002 E3 event. The game's status changed rapidly towards the end of 2002 and was finally canceled in 2003, maybe because Eidos was too busy developing Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness or because the quality of the game was not on par with their standards. However, between the announcement and the cancellation, information was scarce. As the Fear Effect IP seems to have been owned by EIDOS, Kronos would not have been able to pitch the game to another published, if not by reworking it completely. A few bits of info on the game's plot was revealed by the released trailers, with the story following the best ending from the first Fear Effect, in which the protagonist defeated the demons and resurrected Deke. Hana would have been captured and tortured by demons, resulting in hallucinations and flashback that could probably have been used as levels throughout the game. One reason the original Fear Effect games became popular was due to the somewhat sexual scenes between the two girls (Hana and Rain), and in Inferno it seems that they could have added a possible love triangle with one of the other protagonists. In the last few years, many cutscenes from the unfinished game have been uploaded onto Youtube and fans have had a better look on some of the early story elements. In the few screenshots released, we can also see a new dual wielding system for weapons and some gameplay parts similar to the first two games. Fear Effect Inferno would have introduced the separation of the "Health" and "Fear" Meters. However, it is not known how the "Fear" Meter would have affected gameplay since the "Health" Meter functioned as both in the previous two titles. Many fans continued to go to Kronos and GameSpot forums, as well as other related message boards, to keep the memory of Fear Effect Inferno alive until interest in a resurrection finally waned in late 2005. The announcement in early 2004 of a movie based on Fear Effect gave some hope for a new game from an existing EIDOS subsidiary, but that never materialized. Unfortunately, after the cancellation of Fear Effect Inferno, Kronos was not able to survive and the studio had to close down. In early 2015, Square Enix (now the owners of all EIDOS assets) offered the Fear Effect IP to independent developers to allow them to pitch new game ideas, but for now nothing concrete has been announced. We can only hope that some fans of the original series could one day create a successful sequel with the support of Square Enix.

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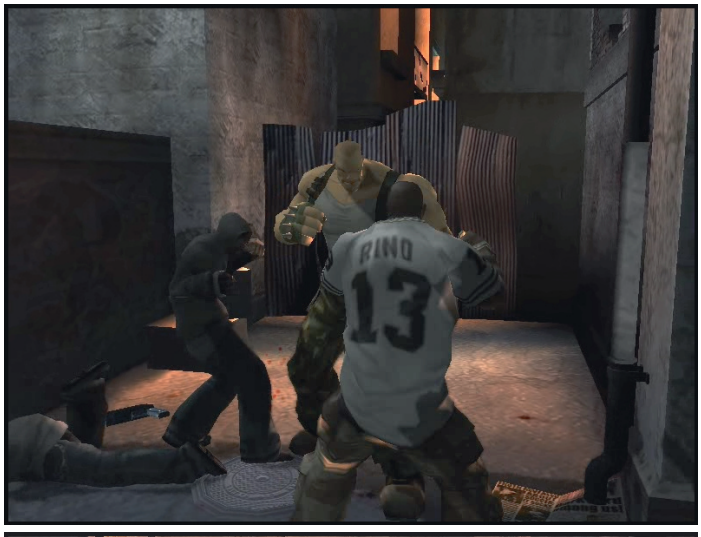
FIGHTING FORCE 3

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The first Fighting Force was developed by Core Design and published by Eidos Interactive for PlayStation and PC in 1997, the same year in which they released Tomb Raider 2. Core Design was at the vertex of their popularity, becoming one of the most recognized teams in the gaming market, their Tomb Raider franchise was a money-making machine. Fighting Force was nothing compared to the calibre of Tomb Raider, it was conceived as a simple 3D incarnation of the classic beat 'em up formula. Players had to fight their way through different levels punching and kicking enemies, either in single player or coop multiplayer, choosing between 4 different characters: Hawk Manson, Ben "Smasher" Jackson, Mace Daniels and Alana McKendricks. Being one of the first quite-fun-to-play beat 'em ups in 3D, the game had a good number of fans, and Eidos probably spent quite a lot of money at the time to promote it in gaming magazines. It's interesting to notice that initially Core Design tried to pitch their Fighting Force concept to Sega, to make it a new 3D chapter in the Streets of Rage series, as an exclusive game for their Saturn console. In the end Sega and Core had different views and expectations for Streets of Rage 3D and broke their collaboration: Core continued to work on their game with a new IP and the Saturn version was never officially published. In November 2008 a prototype of Fighting Force for Saturn was found and preserved online: the game still had its early title "Judgement Force" and some differences from the final version. Fighting Force was popular enough to get a sequel in late 1999 for PlayStation and Dreamcast. Fighting Force 2 was kind of different from the original game, as Core Design decided to change it from a linear beat 'em up to a more action adventure, mission based type of gameplay, coop multiplayer was removed and there was only 1 playable character, Hawk Manson. Fighting Force 2 was not a great success, with low scores and sales. This was the sad end of the Fighting Force series, but a third, unreleased chapter was planned, even if never officially announced. Fighting Force 3 was in development by Core Design between 2002 and 2003, to be released for PlayStation 2 and Xbox. This time the team went back to their roots with



classic beat 'em up gameplay, fully playable coop mode and 4 different characters to choose from: Hawk, Mace and Smasher, returning from the first game, and a new one, Jill. Gamers would have been able to fight their way through many different levels, using punch-kick combos, weapons and interacting with the environment. The environment could be used in many ways, such as, breaking down a water tube to use it as a mace, impaling enemies on iron bars, throwing them under moving trains or against barrels on fire to burn them. The team was able to create a good number of fully playable stages, available in single player and coop, but the project would have still needed about 1 year of development before it would be finished. Unfortunately Fighting Force 3's development was halted in late 2003 / early 2004, mostly because of complex issues between Core Design and Eidos Interactive (its parent company at the time). In mid-2003 Core released Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness for PS2 and it received low ratings from magazines reviews and fans. Eidos decided then to move the Tomb Raider series from Core Design to Crystal Dynamics. Unsure of their future and seeing their most popular franchise being taken away, at the end of 2003 many key members from Core decided to leave to find a new job, and some of them formed a new studio together (Circle Studio). The remaining Fighting Force 3 team lost most of their will to continue working on the game for Eidos, development slowed down and Core found themselves with lack of people to finish the game. After a year of re-organization, in 2005 Core Design was able to release a new game for PSP, Smart Bomb that unfortunately was also a big failure for the company. While they were working on a new project, Free Running, Core Design was sold from Eidos to Rebellion Developments Ltd. After a few years working as an internal team for Rebellion, the studio was officially closed down by them in 2010. Eidos was not immune to the economic crisis either and after many years of losses in early 2009 all of their properties, assets and IPs were sold to Square Enix. It's currently unknown if we'll ever see another Fighting Force game in the future, but it's possible that S-E have quietly forgotten about this long-lost series.

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FINAL FIGHT: SEVEN SONS

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Final Fight: Seven Sons was the prototype for a new Final Fight game in development at Capcom Studio 8 before Final Fight: Streetwise. Studio 8 was formed in late '90s in order to develop the first Final Fight game in 3D (even though it was a fighting game, not a beat 'em up), Final Fight Revenge, for Sega's Saturn and arcade machines. After finishing this as well as Maximo 2, the studio decided to move onto three new projects: Maximo 3, DeVargas, and Final Fight: Seven Sons. All of which were eventually canceled. The camera in Seven Sons was set on a "cambox" principle that roughly imitated a railcam system so the feel would be similar to playing the old 2D games. There was a wide range of moves to use and a new "rage" mode was implemented. A rage meter would fill up when attacking enemies; when full, it could be used to increase your character's strength and size for a short period of time. The game had cel-shaded graphics (similar to Windwaker) and a cartoonishly gritty style to the background art. The only playable character shown in videos was believed to be Dean, from Final Fight 3; the character certainly resembled him, and occasionally used his signature electrical attacks. When told by corporate that "the game, while fun to play, was visually not suited for its core audience", the message was misinterpreted by the team as, "we don't like it at all, continue with the brawler aspect but create a new theme that American gamers could appreciate." The original gameplay core that was established with Seven Sons was swept away, making way for Final Fight: Streetwise. It all went downhill from there. Even with a popular playable beta, Final Fight: Seven Sons was cancelled due to marketing decisions. In the end, from the three games that Studio 8 had in development, only Final Fight: Streetwise was green-lit by Capcom. But when it was finally released, it failed to achieve mainstream success and bombed in sales. Capcom decided to not invest in their California team anymore, which resulted in Studio 8 closing down in 2006.

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GAME ZERO

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Game Zero (later known as Project Z3796WP) is a cancelled sandbox action platformer that Zoonami has been developing from 2000 to 2002 as an exclusive game for Nintendo's Gamecube. The project became popular in 2000 as one of the early games announced for the - at the time - new Nintendo console, when former Rare employee Martin Hollis opened his own software house. Unfortunately Game Zero was never shown to the media and it was quietly canned after about 3 years of development. Martin started working at Rare in 1993 when he was hired to work as a programmer on Killer Instinct.

After KI was completed he found out that Nintendo was about to acquire the license to develop a game based on the new James Bond movie - at the time still without an official name. It seems that Rare's founders Tim and Chris Stamper were initially not sure about working on a James Bond tie-in, but Martin successfully offered himself to direct the project. In 1997 Goldeneye 007 was released for Nintendo 64, becoming one of the most popular titles ever produced for the console. After Goldeneye, the same team started working on Perfect Dark, but in 1998 Martin left Rare with the project still unfinished. He wanted to explore the world and to work on something more exciting and original than a sequel. As we can read from an interview with Gamasutra in 2007:

"Gamasutra: Why didn't you do another Bond game?

Martin Hollis: We were offered the sequel. The rest of the team were keen, and in one respect, out of all of them, I was the one most likely to say, 'Yes' because I loved Bond. But I was able to say, 'No' in a second. A lot of the high level decisions on Perfect Dark were made to try and be different to GoldenEye but still reuse some expertise and engine. Really though, I needed to work on a game more different than Perfect Dark for it to be interesting."

After leaving Rare, initially Martin traveled to South East Asia for half a year and then went to America to collaborate with Nintendo Technology Division. They were busy working on the new "Project Dolphin" 128 bit console, only later renamed as GameCube. As he still wanted to work on innovative games, in 1999 Martin went back to Cambridge, United Kingdom, to set up an experimental indie studio, named Zoonami Ltd. The original Zoonami team was composed just of a few people: Martin Hollis, David Jones, Edward Sludden, Gareth Rees, Paul Hankin and Richard Tucker. Zoonami soon created their first concept, an interesting and mysterious game that was internally nicknamed as "Game Zero". Thanks to Martin's good relationship with Nintendo, Zoonami signed a collaboration with them to develop this concept into an original GameCube exclusive title. As soon as gaming websites and magazines found out about the deal, rumors started to circulate about a possible new GameCube first person shooter, authored by the lead director of Goldeneye and Perfect Dark. That was so far away from the truth.Probably most journalist did not know the main reason why Martin decided to left Rare in 1998, or they would have easily debunked such rumors. Zoonami wanted to create something original, not just duplicate Goldeneye. To give their fans some hints about what they were really working on, the team published a curious "censored pitch letter" on their official website in 2002, with a short description: "We are currently working on a game, but we're not at liberty to reveal very much about it yet. You might want to check out some of the unfounded rumours about it. Meanwhile here is the project proposal, from our files". There are some key concepts that should be noted in this image: esoteric taste, small planet, telescope, device. After this letter, nothing more was announced about Game Zero, no screens or videos were ever released and Zoonami has gone quiet for a few years. Then in 2004 they announced another pitch named "Funkydilla", an original one-button music game - that unfortunately never found a viable publisher. In July 2004 they updated their Website posting a placeholder image with a "spy-themed" desk, showing a gun, a pair of glasses, a briefcase and some top-secret documents. This rendering fueled rumors about Game Zero being a new espionage or hitman-themed FPS for GameCube, but both the press and gamers did not know that the project was already been canned since 2 years at that point. Zoonami disappeared again until 2006, when they finally released their first commercial game, Zendoku, for Nintendo DS and PSP. The studio only released 2 other games before closing down in 2010: Go! Puzzle for PSN and Bonsai Barber for WiiWare, both in 2009. What exactly was Game Zero, how would have it been played and why was it cancelled? The main cause for its cancellation was that the concept they were trying to develop was too complex for its time, due to technical and marketing reasons. Game Zero would have been an original sandbox action platformer set in destructable voxel levels: players would have

been able to mine rocks and terrains, gaining items and resources to build new structures. Does it sound a bit like Minecraft? We asked to Martin if Game Zero could have been a sort of ancestor for Notch's popular sandbox game: "Ancestor isn't quite the right word. After all I believe nobody connected to Zach of Zachtronics (Infiniminer) and to Notch of Mojang saw any part of GameZero. There's a connection. Minecraft has created its precursors." Unfortunately the destruction and building of voxels in Game Zero were too RAM-intensive to be suitable for consoles or PCs hardwares at the time. Zoonami did not want to continue working on something that was not keeping pace with their plans. The console gaming market was also one of their concerns as the most popular GameCube titles in 2002 were examples of traditional gameplay experiences (Resident Evil, Eternal Darkness, Super Mario Sunshine, Metroid Prime and Star Fox Adventures) in contrast with the sandbox, open-ended gameplay design planned for Game Zero. In 3 years Zoonami did many experiments and created a playable prototype, but in the end they decided to cancel its development: it was not the right game and not the right market. "At the time we stopped the project, we had developed a handful of levels with something of a platformer feel. The avatar and vehicles had antigravity movement mainly constrained to the ground, and the player discovered their goals were to navigate, to rescue a few characters from the level, and to collect items partly from the rock. The levels were fairly tightly circumscribed in space, much more like Mario 64 than an open world game." As it happened with Perfect Dark, Game Zero's protagonist would have been a female character. But this time the game was set in a fantasy alien planet inhabited by strange yellow creatures. Players would have been able to explore different areas of the planet using vehicles and laser guns, in a cartoony graphic style created with simple voxel geometries. As they wrote in Zoonami's original company profile: "We know that the key element of a video game is fun. The most important thing for a game is not the number of features or objects or weapons or levels, or the special effects, not story, not sound, not graphics, not even characterization. All these are important and crucial to success, but subordinate to fun. We think it is important to provide new experiences for the player. Old games don't get played much, not because they are bad games, but because they are old. To fulfil the player's desire for variety we strive for creativity and originality." Unfortunately players never had a chance to have fun with Game Zero on GameCube and the project was later forgotten with the release of the new Wii console. When asked if it wasn't "a bit depressing only to have released one game in seven years" in that same Gamasutra interview from 2007, Martin replied: "If some of your projects don't fail, that's evidence you're not taking chances. We are taking chances and a lot of our projects end up being cancelled or put on the shelf. I make the decision in most cases. Not every daring idea can be bought to fruition. [...] This sort of thing happens in movies and TV all the time, although they don't call it research. For every movie that comes out, there are hundreds of scripts. There's a lot of work goes on behind the scenes that no one ever hears about." Although Game Zero was never released, we are happy we had the chance to hear a bit more about this interesting lost project and we could take a look at a few images of the unfinished prototype. Today Martin Hollis is still working on experimental concepts, as in 2013 when he designed an interactive project called "Aim for Love", available to be played during GameCity festival of that year. Using cameras and big screens set in Nottingham's Market Square, people from the crowd could play by "aiming" at other people and interacting with each other, in a strange mix between an alternative reality game and a social experiment.

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GEX 4

Article by: Jesse Cook

What happens when a bunch of developers at Crystal Dynamics come together to work on a project featuring a snarky gecko who must jump through pop-culture inspired levels in order to defeat a dastardly villain bent on making said gecko his mascot? You get 1995's Gex. Originally developed for Panasonic and Sanyo's 3DO console and later ported to the Playstation and PC, Gex was a side scrolling platformer set in Gex's TV after he was captured by his nemesis Rez, overlord of the Media Dimension. After being captured in his own TV, Gex must use his padded hands and feet to climb walls and ceilings, and his tail to whip enemies as he traverses various levels based on various pop culture themes. This theme would continue and evolve throughout the lifespan of the franchise. Though the original title in the series took from pop media on a broader level, using thematic concepts rather than direct ideas from specific franchises; later games in the series veered more and more into the realm of parody with frequent nods to pop icons like James Bond, Poltergeist, Bruce Lee, and the Looney Tunes. In total, Crystal Dynamics developed three titles for the franchise including: Gex (1994), Gex: Enter the Gecko (1998), and Gex: Deep Cover Gecko (1999). In addition, there were also some ports of the console games to handhelds. The relative success of these titles led Crystal Dynamics to prepare a fourth game for the series for the Playstation 2. However, the complete lack of information related to the project, suggests that it was cancelled early in its production. The only official content related to the project is two pieces of concept art: one depicting Gex scaling a monolithic stone statue of a Zen gecko sitting in prayer carved into the face of a cliff; the other contains two clusters of three electric pyres jutting up out of a large body of water, with Gex climbing one of the pyres. Both pieces appear to take place in original locales instead of within cultural homages. Based on these sparse details, it is unclear if the game would have continued the tradition of taking place in Gex's television set, or would have explored the corporeal world that Gex lived in. Considering that the project was terminated so early in development, there is virtually no information related to why the franchise did not move forward with a new game for the Playstation 2, especially considering that the last game in the series was the highest selling game in the franchise: selling 3 million copies in 1999, and 6 million in years following its release. Even with lukewarm reviews, the game appears to have sold well, which would suggest that Eidos and Crystal Dynamics would want to continue publishing games under this title. Yet, the next game to come from the developer was a 2001 racing game titled Mad Dash Racing. A departure from the platforming Gex, Mad Dash is a story-based racing game that pits a gaggle of nefarious characters against each other in the hunt for red meteor chunks. The catch in the narrative is that the races were created by a wizard desirous of the chunks to aid him in carrying out his own villainy. Two years later, Crystal Dynamics created Whiplash, a kooky platformer based on animal test labs, starring a twitchy rabbit and weasel as the protagonists of the story. The

mechanical twist for this game is that the two central characters are bound together by a chain, which is used to accomplish various feats throughout their adventure. After this, the Crystal Dynamics team fell quiet. Eventually, Crystal Dynamics was acquired by Square Enix in 2009, and its IPs were dissolved into Square's existing library of intellectual properties. This seemed to solidify the belief that Gex was put to rest as a remnant of the '90s and early '00s, never to be resurrected for future consoles. But, Square Enix's new indie project Collective may provide aspiring programmers the opportunity to resuscitate the little lizard for a new generation of gamers. Collective provides small teams of developers a platform to showcase their game ideas for the gaming community with the possibility of getting these project funded through various crowdfunding services. From the Collective website: "Collective is a curated platform that enables creators to post ideas, and gamers to judge whether those ideas should become reality or not." Currently, Gex is an available property for developers to take from the Square Enix library and pitch as a new game in the series. Whether a developer has actually obtained the rights to develop a new Gex game is unclear because there is no official announcement regarding the game, but some buzz around various blog sites suggests that someone has succeeded in winning the right to move forward with a Gex 4. As of the publication of this book, there is no official news on the title, and there is no material from Square declaring a "winner" in the voting process. But, it is fun to think that the plucky gecko from the past is on his way back to the limelight through the work of some young developers' dedication to the craft of game design.

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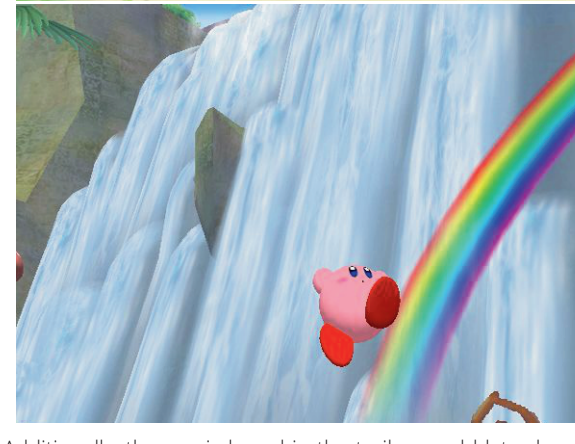
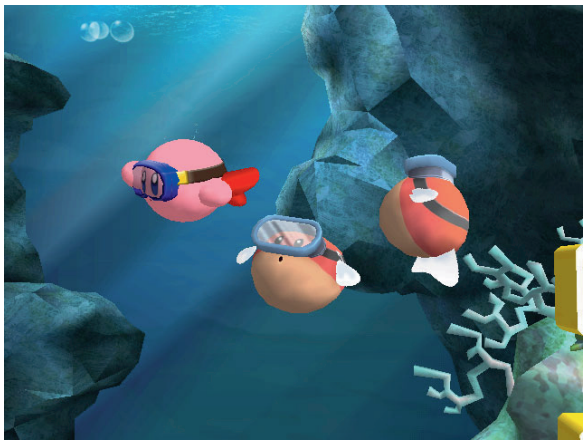
KIRBY ADVENTURE

Article by: Jeff Wheaton



In 2005, during the Electronic Entertainment Expo, Nintendo revealed a trailer for a new Kirby game that was to be released for the Nintendo Gamecube. The game shown in the trailer was a side-scrolling game with 3D environments, similar to Kirby 64. Kirby was shown copying enemies' abilities, and then giving up those abilities to create helper characters that could be controlled by the AI or another player, similar to Kirby Super Star for the Super Nintendo. In Kirby GCN, as the game would come to be known, this could be done with up to three other players, as opposed to the one player limitation in Kirby Super Star. Details on the game were limited afterwards, and the game would be absent from Nintendo's showings in events that followed. In late 2006, Nintendo Power magazine no longer listed the game on the upcoming releases list for Gamecube, and nothing would be heard about it until six years after its announcement. There are a few elements from Kirby GCN that would survive and appear in later Kirby games. The most notable of these was the massive robotic DeDeDe boss seen in the trailer. This enemy would make its official debut in Kirby Mass Attack for the Nintendo DS as HR-D3, a boss in one of the included sub-game modes, and would make a second appearance as a boss in the Extra Game mode in Kirby's Return to Dreamland. Additionally, the music heard in the trailer would later be used as the music for Return to Dreamland's Arena and True Arena sub-game modes, as well as being used as the music for one of Kirby: Triple Deluxe's extra stages. Kirby's Return to Dreamland would see a release on the Nintendo Wii in October of 2011 as the result of development on Kirby GCN. It was revealed in an Iwata



Asks interview with Shigefumi Kawase (and several other developers of Return to Dreamland) that Kirby GCN evolved over time and actually became three separate Kirby games, all of which would eventually be canceled. The game shown in the trailer was the first of these games, and was to be built around the concept of four people playing together at the same time. Kawase revealed that difficulties arose in making the game fun as both a multiplayer and single-player game, which led to its cancellation. The second project was to take place in a full 3D space, instead of being a side-scrolling game like most other games in the series, with the player controlling Kirby from an isometric perspective. However, complications arose in bringing the game up to a level of quality expected by Nintendo, and it was canceled as well. The third one was to be a side-scrolling game with the art style of a pop-up book. It was to have all-new copy abilities and have more in-depth mechanics than previous games in the series. According to Kawase, these three prototypes were in development for much of the time between the initial showing of the trailer and the release of Kirby's Return to Dreamland. It should be noted that Kirby GCN wasn't ever an official title for the game, but is rather an unofficial title used to refer to any of the three canceled Kirby games for the Gamecube console. However, there were two official names associated with the game: Kirby: Legend of the Stars, and Kirby Adventure. Each of the three canceled projects wouldn't remain forever unseen, though, as elements from each of these three canceled projects would make their way into Kirby's Return to Dream Land, which, according to information contained within the Special Edition of Kirby's Dream Collection, was meant to be a successor to the Kirby GCN trio of unseen games.

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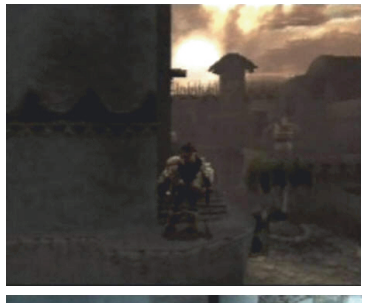
MAXIMO 3

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Maximo 3 is the cancelled third episode in the Maximo series, a game that many fans were waiting for, but unfortunately things went not as planned. The original Maximo: Ghosts to Glory is a 3D action game created as a spiritual sequel to the 2D Ghosts n' Goblins series, developed by Capcom Production Studio 8 and released for PlayStation 2 in 2001 / 2002. A sequel, Maximo vs. Army of Zin was released in 2003 and the third game was in the works by the same team, but after only a few months of development it was canned due to lower than expected sales from Maximo 2. Maximo 3 was started soon after Studio 8 finished work on the second chapter (Maximo 2 ends with the promise of a third game, with Maximo and his allies teaming up to find Queen Sophia), and they created many concept arts, with new enemies, settings (an Arabian theme, inspired by the success of Prince of Persia: Sands of Time) and features. The "cartoony" feel of the original games was dropped for a more gritty look. In the original design doc we can read more about Maximo 3's gameplay mechanics and story: "Across the Southern Sea, in a land of exotic culture and

great history, lies the city of Mashhad, the gateway to the ancient east, but lurking in the shadow of a proud people are the forces of blood and corruption. The Cult of Chut, a religious order legion with fanatics, is preparing to transform the city into a single bloody alter whose population will be the sacrifice in their apocalyptic ritual. But all is not lost: Maximo stands against this tide of destruction. Having followed the trail of his lost love, Maximo arrived in Mashhad with hopes that his journey will soon end. Now he will pit his sword and wits against the church's faceless leaders and rescue Sophia; the possessed conduit through which Chut makes itself heard. Maximo 3 stars with Maximo and his band in bad shape. In their quest for Sophia, the heroes have encountered the Cult of Chut, death worshipers who find a "man who walks with Death" an affront to their beliefs. As a result, Baron has been killed, Tinker maimed and Maximo and Grim have been merged into one, thanks to a curse. Maximo and Tinker have been hunting down cultist sects when they arrive in Mashhad, seeking revenge and a cure to Maximo's condition." The new connection between Maximo and Grim would have been used as one of the main features of Maximo 3, needed to progress through the game: "Maximo is covered in tattoos, which are actually the external manifestation of the cultist's curse that has trapped Grim within him. With the press of a button, Maximo transforms into Grim, allowing him several abilities. As a result of the curse on Maximo, turning into Grim drains Maximo's Health. Stay as Grim for too long and Maximo will lose a life. Only by collecting the souls of the evil cultists can Maximo sustain himself in Grim form. At some point in the game, Maximo will use Grim's form as a disguise to infiltrate the cult's tower during Chut Holy Day. Gameplay will have the players switch the two forms. As a phantom. Grim can slide up walls, flow like a shadow along walls, give a little extra distance to a jump and glide down from long drops. In addition, the player can perform several attacks with his scythe. Grim attacks do not always kill, rather they are used to "prep" an enemy for Maximo's attacks, such as breaking a cultist's protection spell or "mortalizing" ghostly foes. While in Grim form, the player cannot talk to innocents as they are too scared. However, Grim's attack will free the innocents of the cult's influence, turning them from enemies to normal innocents that Maximo must rescue from other enemies." After this first concept phase, Capcom Studio 8 created an early playable prototype with a test level, which would later have been used as the hub world of the game. In this prototype, it was possible to interact with a few NPCs, climb upon its walls and fight with some enemies. There was only one functioning enemy type: a the basic cultist that can also be seen in the concept art. Looking at this unfinished prototype and reading the design doc, it seems that Maximo 3 could have been the best game in the Maximo series, but unfortunately not much more work was done on it, as it was canned soon after the creation of this early demo. Some new items and weapons were also planned, such as the Sword Grapple to grab ledges, the Flintlock Rifle (a new gun-weapon type), Claws to climb up walls, the Crossbolt Gauntlet (to shoot bolts and to use it as a grapple hook to swing or to be pulled towards a secret area) and the Horn (to knocks enemies back and to cause parts of the scenario to shake and break to find new paths). There was also a "lock on" mechanic, very much like the 3D Zelda games. Maximo 3 was going to be a much more ambitious project than Maximo 1&2 and would have taken the series into a full action-adventure game, more similar to The Legend of Zelda. The new lead designer was heavily inspired by exploration / puzzle aspects of Zelda, so the game was going to be more focused on exploration and to be less linear than the previous titles. Capcom Production Studio 8 was full of talented artists and after they finished Maximo 2 they started to work on 3 interesting pitches: Maximo 3, DeVargas and Final Fight: Seven Sons, the unreleased FF that was planned before Final Fight: Streetwise. In the end, only FF: Streetwise was greenlighted from Capcom, but when it was released it failed to achieve mainstream success and it bombed in sales. Capcom decided to not invest in their California team anymore and sadly Production Studio 8 was closed down in 2006. Only a few concept arts, a video and a few pages from the design doc remain to preserve the existence of Maximo 3.



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NIGHTFALL

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Around 2002 Core Design had already completed a few games for PlayStation 2, such as Project Eden and Thunderhawk, both released in 2001, and they were going to complete Herdy Gerdy, an action / strategy puzzle game. During this time they were also working on a cancelled survival / action horror game titled Nightfall, of which unfortunately there is limited information available. Former Core Design developers that we talked to, remember that Nightfall was going to be a game about surviving in an island overrun by werewolves, after the main character crashed there in a helicopter. It seems that before Nightfall the team tried to pitch a videogame adaption of the Preacher comic to Vertigo / DC Comics, but that was soon canned so they tried to develop their concept into a new, original IP. It's possible that the idea about a Preacher videogame was conceived during the same time in which independent filmmaking studios Storm Entertainment and Electric Entertainment announced the pre-production of a Preacher movie, but after a while the film was pushed back (and never realized) because of financial issues. People that were able to see an early Nightfall prototype remember that it looked great for a PS2 title, but not much work was done on it before the cancellation. After Nightfall was cancelled, Core Design developed such titles as Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness, Smart Bomb and the cancelled Fighting Force 3, until they were sold from Eidos to Rebellion Developments Ltd. We hope to be able to preserve more info about Nightfall on the Unseen64 website in the future, but for now it remains one of the most interesting and obscure lost games, by one of the most important software houses from the late '90s.

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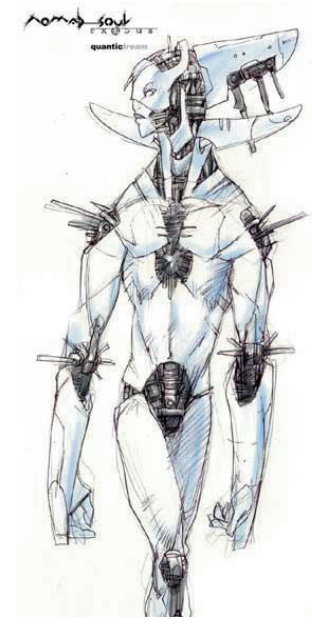
Interviews with former Core Design developers

OMIKRON 2: NOMAD SOUL EXODUS

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Nomad Soul 2: Exodus (later also known as Omikron 2: Karma) is a cancelled adventure game that was in development by French studio Quantic Dream, initially planned for PC, Dreamcast and PlayStation 2, but then cancelled and re-developed for Xbox 360 and PS3, before it was cancelled again. The project would have been a direct sequel to Omikron: The Nomad Soul, the title published by Eidos in 1999 / 2000 for Microsoft Windows and Sega Dreamcast, an ambitious game directed by David Cage (Quantic Dream's founder) with many interesting features that soon became a cult classic. The original game could be described as the weird French cousin of Shenmue, having an "open world" city to freely explore, buildings to enter, people to talk with about random things and a wide variety of different gameplay genres. In some parts, Omikron plays like a

classic adventure game, with items to use and puzzles to solve, you can fight enemies in 1 VS 1 3D fighting games, much like Tekken, and some parts play like first person arena shooters like Unreal Tournament. With this strange mix of gameplay, its non-linear structure in which it was not fully clear what to do to progress, meta references to its videogame format, awkward dialogues, strange characters and an awesome soundtrack composed by David Bowie, it's easy to understand how Omikron was able to gain so many fans (and so many haters). Today Quantic Dream is known more for their story-driven projects, such as Heavy Rain and Beyond: Two Souls, but Nomad Souls 2 would have had more emphasis on open ended gameplay, expanding what they already did in the first game. Combining and improving multiple mechanics to create a flowing mix of genres using real time combat, puzzle solving, first person shooting and exploration, Nomad Soul 2 would have had a huge futuristic world to dive in, with a lively population to interact with, even stranger characters and more surreal sci-fi tales. The plot of Nomad Soul 2 would have taken place hundreds of years after the events of the first game, in which a demon called Astroth was defeated by the Nomad Soul (The Player). The government of the original game has been overthrown by the Awakened Revolution, the city of Omikron has been transformed by advancing technology and a new religion called "The Techno Religion" would preach for The Great Migration, a global transfer of mankind to computer networks. Unfortunately the first Dreamcast / PS2 / PC version of Nomad Soul 2 was cancelled when ties with Eidos Interactive were severed during early development, forcing Quantic Dream to move their projects to Vivendi Universal and then Atari, signing a contract to start development on Fahrenheit (also known as Indigo Prophecy in the US). In 2013 David Cage spoke at an event titled "Masterclass" in Paris, hosted by the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, in which they asked him about the lost Omikron sequel:



"David Cage: Eidos wanted us to make Nomal Soul 2, at first. So we thought about Nomad Soul 2 for a few months, then we thought...

Interviewer: Did you want to make it, back then?

David Cage: No. No, honestly, no. We had had our fill so much with the first one... Eidos came to see us and we were... We had just shipped the game, we were exhausted and they told us: "OK, the next one is for next Christmas." – "Huh? Next Christmas? In ten months? But it's... it's... No? Just the time to write it.... it won't even be enough for me to write it, let alone make it..." And that's it. It was inconceivable so we got on bad terms with Eidos."

In 2003 David Cage wrote in the official Quantic Dream website: "A lot of people are now waiting for this game (Nomad Souls 2). But due to different views on the project with Eidos, we mutually decided to put it on hold. On our side, after two years on this very challenging project, the team and I wanted to work on something different. This is how we started Fahrenheit (published by Vivendi, due Q4 2004). I can see that three years after, there is still a strong community of fans waiting for a sequel to Nomad Soul. We have ideas, concepts and designs for this sequel and the team is ready to go back to the city of Omikron. We are seriously considering working on Exodus and we are currently talking to different major publishers. Nothing is done yet, but we will definitely keep you posted when an official announcement will be made." Before the final release of Fahrenheit for PS2, Xbox and PC in September 2005, on April of the same year Quantic Dream officially announced the restart of development for Nomad Souls 2: Exodus (along with another project called "Infraworld") with a new title, "Omikron 2: Karma" this time planned to be published for PS3 and Xbox 360 consoles. The plan was going to fail just a few months later, when they signed another contract with Sony to develop Heavy Rain (announced at E3 2006 with their "The Casting" tech demo). The team worked hard on this Sony exclusive for more than 4 years and Heavy Rain was finally released in February 2010. During all this time, Quantic Dream was not able to continue working on Omikron 2 and the project had to be stopped again. In 2006 Infraworld was also cancelled because it seems that "the concept did not appeal to its publishers", but in the meantime Heavy Rain sold over two million copies worldwide and in 2011 Quantic Dream and Sony trademarked "Infraworld" again, along with another new IP called "Fiv5". Thanks to the huge success of Heavy Rain, the two companies strengthen their collaboration and in October 2013 they released Beyond: Two Souls for PS3, this could be the final version of the game that was started as Infraworld. In 2015 Quantic Dream revealed at Paris Games

week their new PS4 game titled "Detroit", we don't know if this could be a name change for Fiv5. At the same “Masterclass” event in 2013 David Cage replied to a question about what he would have changed in Nomad Soul if he could make it again today. Here’s his answer: “Hmm... [silence] I would change many things. First, I think I wouldn’t make a game which subject is science fiction any more. I love science fiction but, for me... as soon as there’s a very pronounced genre, it has to be the background, not the subject. So I’d make something that’s not focused on robots and spaceships and hovercrafts. I’d make something centered around the feelings of the character because it would instantly create a link, a connection with the player. Then, you can tell whatever you want, you could have imagined any stories, any technology and whatever you want but the subject is the human being and the feeling, first and foremost, because that’s what makes you interested in the experience. I think it would certainly be less dense. It wouldn’t go off in all different directions and I’d try to have an intention that’s - in my point of view - clearer and stronger and more... voilà. Trying to know better what you want to say before saying it.” Thinking about what happened when Quantic Dream focused their games on story rather than open ended gameplay and the success that they are having with their latest “interactive movies”, we can speculate that a complex project like a sequel to Omikron is not going to happen anytime soon. They found their great way of creating “linear” games that can express all sorts of emotions, being able to make gamers to participate in the story with their actions through the controller, with no need to develop such an overambitious open world game with multiple gameplay mechanics.

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PHOENIX

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Before Bungie became popular among console gamers thanks to huge franchises such as the Halo and Destiny series, in the early ‘90s the studio was focused on creating games for Mac computers. Their first hit was a classic sci-fi FPS titled Marathon (released in 1994) that somehow set the tone for what would became Halo many years later. Two sequels titled Marathon 2: Durandal and Marathon Infinity were released respectively in 1995 and 1996. While Bungie planned to develop a fourth Marathon after Infinity, early screenshots of Quake made the team rethink the idea, wanting to do something different to not compete directly with ID Software’s new, impressive 3D shooter. At the time Jason Jones, Bungie's co-founder along with Alex Seropian, had the idea of creating a fantasy tactical game where you fight against huge armies of characters. It was a project nicknamed “The Giant Bloody War Game”, inspired by movies such as Braveheart and fantasy novels such as The Black Company. This was the conception of Myth: The Fallen Lords, a game that became another big success for Bungie and holder of many innovations for the RTS genre. Myth was released in late 1997 for both Mac and PC, selling over 350,000 units worldwide; it was acclaimed by the press and gamers, receiving many “best game of the year” awards. As it happened with Marathon, Bungie embraced the popularity of their new franchise and soon started development on a sequel, Myth II: Soulblighter. Released in December 1998, Myth II sold even more than the first, making Bungie one of the most loved Mac / PC developers of those years and a cult studio for RTS fanatics. Just a few months later at the Macworld event in July 1999, during Steve Jobs' keynote Bungie showed the world their new ambitious project: Halo. Set to be a Mac exclusive and a third person team based shooter, Halo would bring Bungie back to the sci-fi settings

already seen in Marathon and it looked amazing for its time. The rest is history: a year later Bungie was officially purchased by Microsoft, when the company was trying to acquire developers to create exclusive games for their debut console: the Xbox. The Myth franchise was transferred to its publisher Take-Two Interactive, but Microsoft and Bungie did not forget their RTS fans and were already planning a new tactical game that would have revolutionized the genre on console. This new project was internally known as "Phoenix" and it would have been one of the first exclusive Xbox games by Bungie. Unfortunately the world never had a chance to see it before it was cancelled a couple of years later. Existence of the Phoenix project was speculated by fans as early as September 1999, when Bungie posted a series of photos from their annual company picnic with notes about "the team formerly known as Myth II" implying that the same people were working on a new game. The title "Phoenix" and "Breach" are the most used to refer to this project, but it did not have a final name yet and other titles as Siege, Hammer of Battle, Warblow, Battlefist, Sunder and Siege of Fury were being considered. Phoenix would have been a strategy fantasy siege warfare, mixing tower defence gameplay with Myth's class focused armies and an innovative destructible environment system. The team behind this concept was indeed the same as the popular Myth series, with such names as Chris Barrett, Mark Bernal, Paul Bertone, Bob Settles, Joshua Grass, Juan Ramirez, Craig Mullins and Paul Clift, along with new Bungie employees such as Dan Orzulak (Wing Commander series, Ultima VIII), Ben Wallace, Eamon McKenzie, Jason Major, Lorraine McLees (Oni). The Myth series was already acclaimed for its original fantasy storyline and for Phoenix Bungie wanted to expand the lore even more, with a single player campaign heavily inspired by classic Role Playing games, featuring tight dialogs, a complex plot and high quality cut scenes set in a new detailed world imagined by writer and game designer John Scott Tynes (author of Magic: The Gathering - Battlemage and Ice Age, Delta Green, Unknown Armies, Puppetland, and many other games) along with additional feedback from Bob Settles. It's interesting to notice that even Halo was initially conceived as a real time strategy game (as a sci-fi Myth), but after it was changed into a shooter Phoenix became the leading tactical game to continue Bungie's tradition of deep RTS. While the genre is not as popular today as it was in late '90s, a strategy game like Phoenix was seen by Microsoft as an important title for their Xbox lineup. Ed Fries (former vice president of game publishing at Microsoft for the original Xbox) at the time said that he

was more excited about Phoenix than Halo, as recall by former Bungie composer Marty O'Donnell during an interview with IGN in March 2016. What exactly was Phoenix and why could it have been one of the most important titles for Microsoft's debut console? Phoenix was conceived as an over the top action strategy game focused on siege warfare, with a revolutionary real time brick-by-brick castle and environment destruction system. Players would begin the battle as either a "Defender" or "Attacker" deploying a light array of forces and assault or defend a completely destroyable castle and deformable battlefield. These changes to the world would be permanent so battlefields would evolve during the game and new tactics would be needed as the level changed under the army's attacks. In July 2013, during an interview with IGN Jason Jones shared some of his memories about Phoenix: "It was a project we were working on at the same time we were working on Halo 1 [...] There was a lot that was really interesting about it, even back in Chicago, before the acquisition. It was a game that was based on a technology that was sort of Minecraft-like, in that it could render... You could build castles out of blocks, for example, and then knock them down. [...] The best thing we can do is just look at the build... I don't even know if we have one anymore. It was cool. There were big castles and you could knock them down with trebuchets. Knocking holes in the wall, and dudes would come out [...] This game was going between RTS and... It's hard to even describe." Six different races were planned (Humans, Goblins, Dwarves, Undead, Trolls, Elves / Vermin), each with its own units, weapons, magic and classes that could be combined for permutations of strategic variety. Attacking players would watch over the playable area in an over-the-top view by rotating around their "camera rail" looking at the main objective (a castle keep, a character to kill, a town, etc.), choosing the best angle to launch troops that would march forward, fighting, destroying objects and using their abilities to conquer the target. Defending players would watch over their area to protect, rotating the camera from the center of the castle (or another target), choosing units to guard the main objective, crafting their defenses around the walls, terrain and fortifications. War Machines and Siege Engines would also be available for both armies in advanced levels, giving even more firepower to bypass all the terrain obstacles, breach the walls and destroy the keep, or more fortification to defend the castle. Each unit would also have a "Group Ability" that made them stronger when launched in combination with other units. Levels would be split into multiple days and after each day (during the night) players would be able to upgrade or add additional forces to their current troop types, allowing them to change and join tactics. New units would cost a certain amount of gold depending on their power and gold could be earned by players in different ways. Each mission had a limited amount of days to be completed, but by conquering or protecting a castle, destroying or defending special areas, the game would add or remove time and days from the total remaining "Siege Time". Players could try to get bonuses by destroying all of the castle walls and towers before attacking the keep, or they could create multiple breaches on various sides of the castle to confuse and disperse the defender's units. On the defender side, players could try to fight the attacker in the open field to keep it away from the castle, or to guard walls and side

objectives fiercely with specific units to stop breaches from being created. Each map would have a different castle and surroundings, with hills, cliffs, lakes, streams and woods, with a varying effect on the units and combat strategy. For example Human knights would slow down while climbing uphill, Undeads would use water and lakes as cover, cliffs sides would turn away units unless they had a climb ability, flying or jumping units could leap across an open moat. High grass, bushes and shrubs would provide cover but could be set on fire, "Glyph Stones" would function as an Anti-magic zone that stops all units from casting, woods could be set on fire and holes in the ground could be created by explosions. As Phoenix was meant to be one of the graphical showcases for the original Xbox, the team wanted every object to be fully destroyable, with persistent fire and smoke on the battlefield, grass that would turn muddy and carnages tracked with body parts, bloodstains and scorch marks all around the area. One of the most important features of Myth and other Bungie titles was their multiplayer mode and Phoenix would also have had a versus mode for up to two players, with split screen on the same console, via Xbox live or local LAN with two consoles. As mentioned before the story of Phoenix was meant to be a big deal, set to engross players into its fantasy world with an epic legend spanning thousands of years, beginning from the genesis of this universe through an astounding number of historical events integrated within its lore. It was a tale of empires, conquest and mystical destiny, rich with symbolism. While the full storyline is too long to unveil in this book, here's a summary of the main backstory envisioned for Phoenix:

“Before the world was the world, there was a comet streaking through the void. She drew near the great roiling sun and fell in love, slipping softly into a respectful dance around and around the sun’s warmth. As the comet slowed and circled she unfolded herself into the first troll. As she drifted around her love, she took pebbles from the darkness and held them together until they were fused by the warmth and light. The sun saw this and felt the first troll’s great love, and he glowed ever brighter and kinder. In his radiance, the troll rolled and the world grew and soon it was too big for her alone. She took some of the earth and made another of her kind, and another, and they all rolled the great balls of star dust across the surface of the world and they all grew together. After the trolls have spent millennia building the world they have sculpted the mountains, dug channels for the rivers, and planted the forests, all to prepare the way for the races who would follow. Primitive dwarven tribes accumulate on the southern shores of the great lake. These early dwarves emerge from rocks and boulders; rock spirits called forth into flesh by the trolls. Elves step out of trees one day; they are wood spirits all made flesh overnight by the trolls. Like the dwarves, the secrets of their origins are lost. The elves mingle with the dwarves, and they all live

off the land and water. A thunderstorm lasts four weeks, bombarding the land with water and small, mewling creatures that develop into goblins, called down from the sky by the trolls. Like the rain, the goblins are rootless, drifting creatures of opportunity. The goblins retain some of this knowledge, not that anyone else believes it. Exhausted from this burst of creation, all the trolls hide underground and sleep for a century. The trolls dream of humans, and awake to find the hairless humanoids living a savage existence in the cold northern tundra. Even the trolls are baffled by this development. Three trolls do not awaken immediately and instead travel to the Netherworld, where they weave the ladder to the next world that all souls will travel. They become the Three Weavers and they live both in the real world and the Netherworld. Dwarves, elves, and goblins all live in the fertile lands south of the great lake. Although resources are plentiful, they often squabble and fight. The humans are isolated in the north lands and fight with each other. Saraoth of the elves discovered the Dream of Conquest, and within it he met a powerful elven War Mage named Invictus. Invictus told Saraoth that he, too, could be a War Mage, and give all his people a dream so powerful that they would rise up and conquer the world. They need never be surpassed by the humans. All he had to do was say yes. Saraoth agreed. But Invictus was no elf. He could be whatever he wanted to be, and since Saraoth wanted to see an elf that's what he saw. Invictus was a living dream, the pure embodiment of Conquest itself. And that was his only goal: to capture and devour one world after another, should anyone be so foolish as to open the door to his kingdom of nightmares. 1707: Holder Saraoth of the elves becomes a War Mage, triggering the transformation of elves into vermin, and launches the Corruption War. The vermin recruit several goblin tribes to serve as mercenaries, and teach some of them to be assassins. 1708: The vermin Battlemages emerge. Vermin troops capture and enslave the Three Weavers to harness the world's soul energy. 1711: The Corruption War ends, with the vermin defeated and now sleeping in a magical trance. The human general and War Mage, Morgyn Wilde, dies and fights a war against Invictus in the netherworld, leading an army of souls in a perpetual stalemate. Upon Morgyn's death the human wizards took his heart and secured it in a vase so that Invictus could not claim him. In the world of the living no one knew that the Three Weavers were still prisoners, so that in the Netherworld all the souls of the dead continued to join the Soul Matrix of Invictus. A hundred years passed and all was well. In the world of the living, a robed man moves in shadow through a temple by night. He opens a secret chamber and finds a vase bound in chains. He smashes the vase, and a still-beating heart falls out. With a swing of his sword, he cleaves it in twain. In the netherworld, Wilde falters, reeling from the magical blow. Invictus sneers and his forces overrun Wilde's position. Invictus shoots a tendril up through the ground into the column of light that Wilde was defending. In the heart of the Blight, the vermin still lie sleeping in a magical trance, surrounding the likewise-slumbering body of Invictus. Then the spiritual tendril emerges and Invictus awakes. So do the blue-black veins of the vermin, who all rise from their magical slumber. 1810: The vermin emerge from the Blight and again wage war on the world."

This was just the incipit of what players would then play and experience in Phoenix's epic fantasy. Unfortunately, this grand legend never saw the light of day. While the Phoenix team was working hard on their ambitious RTS, Halo became the major focus for Bungie. They had to complete it in time for the launch of the Xbox, planned for November 2001. With Oni finally completed in late 2000 (then published in January 2001), part of the Bungie West team was already moved from San Jose to Bungie's new location in Microsoft's office

complex in Redmond. Bungie West initially pitched an original game titled “Monster Hunter” (not related to Capcom’s series) but it was soon cancelled when they had to work on Halo’s hugely popular multiplayer mode. In mid 2001, it was clear that the Phoenix team also had to put their game on hold to help finish Halo. Thanks to the efforts of all the talented developers at Bungie and many months of crunch time, Halo: Combat Evolved was successfully completed in late 2001 and finally released on November 15th. The Phoenix Team was now able to go back to developing their epic strategy title. Unfortunately after many months working on a frenetic and fun game like Halo, going back to work on the Phoenix prototype showed all of its limits. The tactical gameplay was just not on par with their expectations. Halo raised and moved the bar of what Xbox gamers expected Bungie to create and a fantasy strategy game with a slow-to-play prototype did not survive to the project review. In 2004 during an interview by EGM with Pete Parsons (at the time Bungie’s Studio Manager but now their Chief Executive Officer), they briefly talked about Phoenix: “PP: The thing I'll tell you is that we are bigger and more capable than we've ever been, and so the ability to entertain more than one thing is a possibility. But we are gonna do something different.

EGM: Is that the Phoenix project we've heard rumors of in the past?

PP: Phoenix is actually something that we're not doing. Any of the best developers I know -- they all have projects or game mechanics that they work on [before] they ultimately decide whether they should take them into production - take the learning from that and move on. Phoenix was one of those things that we decided shouldn't be carried out, but there's a ton of learning and a ton of experience people gained from it that ultimately we will continue.”

In the already mentioned 2013 interview with Jason Jones, he also said: “Ultimately the reason the game [Phoenix] never saw the light of day was because of

Halo. The [Project Phoenix] team got scavenged a number of times, both on Halo 1 and Halo 2, to finish Halo. [...] It was trying to find out what it was, and it hadn't. It made it very clear at several junctures, 'Well, should we put all the resources on the team behind Halo, or should we keep working on this game?' Eventually we made the decision that it was Halo. The team just went away, or the project went away. The people are still here." Phoenix was cancelled by Bungie in 2002 and following the huge commercial success of the first Halo, plans for a sequel were already moving. Unfortunately part of the Phoenix Team did not want to work again on another Halo: they came from the Myth series and they loved fantasy settings. A sci-fi shooter was just not what they wanted to create. Managers at Bungie gave them the chance to create a new concept for a fantasy game, but this time it would have been a frenetic third person action adventure: its codename was Gypsum. In Gypsum players would fight using different mythical creatures (as a Minotaur) and soon a playable prototype was created, using the Halo engine and music by Marty O'Donnell. People that had a chance to play this demo remember how fun and promising it felt, but that was still not enough to stop the Halo beast. After a while it happened again: Bungie had to complete Halo 2 on time and they moved all their employees to the project. Gypsum was canned and Bungie only released Halo sequels in the following years until they left Microsoft and went on to work with Activision Blizzard, to publish Destiny in September 2014. Bungie did not forget Phoenix during all those years and they added a related easter egg in Halo 3: the Vanguard achievement (obtained when players earns 50,000 points while playing the meta-game on The Covenant level) is the original Phoenix logo.

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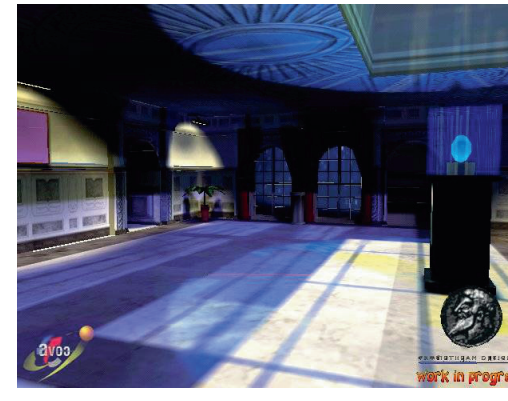
PICASSIO

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Picassio is a cancelled stealth game that was in development by Promethean Designs, a company originally founded in 1994 under the name "East Point Software" to create conversions of popular games as Worms, The Lion King and Disney's Aladdin for PC and consoles. In 1997 the team decided to change its name to Promethean Designs to focus on new original games and released a few racing games as Speed Demons and Renegade Racers. In the same years Promethean started working on Picassio, their ambitious project that was originally supposed to be released on the Dreamcast, only to be moved to PS2 and GameCube due to development delays and technological limitations of Sega's console. Picassio would have let players become international thieves, to sneak into real museums across the world to steal precious paintings and jewellery, using technological equipment and stealth tactics. The game was to be powered by a proprietary 3D engine that allowed for dynamic lighting, skeletal animation and volumetric fog. The basic plot of Picassio centered around two thieves: Picassio (a male thief) and a rival female thief named Kaito. The main protagonist had entered a deal



with a wealthy businessman to acquire (steal) as many major artworks as possible, for their personal collection over the course of about a week. Gamers would have to steal those artworks paying attention to guards, cameras and competing against the rival thief to gain more loot. Using a first person or third person perspective the game would have incorporated mechanics familiar within stealth titles as Metal Gear Solid, Splinter Cell and the Thief series. Available during the different missions there would have been many special gadgets such as dart guns, mini cameras, night vision optics, stun-gun darts, chloroform, a crossbow, shadow holograms and a sound indicator to allow players to know if the amount of noise being made could compromise the heist. Players had no offensive capabilities but only defensive traps and devices: being caught by guards would have failed the mission. Ross Ritchie, project manager and lead artist at Promethean Designs, talked about Picassio during in an interview with Gamespot: "There are 12 missions, each complete with its own backstory, key factors, and plot. The 3D environments are based on famous museums. There'll be private homes, which will have every conceivable type of deterrent, both human and electronic. Each mission will require different tactics. However, every mission will put you up against Kaito (the other main character) and time." We would had to begin each mission with a planning stage, follow a briefing and looking at blueprints of the area, choosing which devices to brought in that area, as the thief could only carry five gadgets at one time (though bonus gear would have been hidden within the level to be retrieved at any time). Picassio's levels would have been filled with various enemy types, as explained by Ross in the same interview: "There is a high number of enemies, ranging from guard dogs to robots, and they'll all have several levels of AI. Your rival cat burglar, Kaito, will be as intelligent as we can make him. We are encapsulating the AI in a run-time scripted language, which enables the game designers to play with the AI without having to explain to the programmers exactly what they are on about. The artists will be using multiple motion path, which the code will modify in-game as necessary. Higher AI levels incorporate some learning, so that the game to a certain extent will adapt its difficulty to the player's skill levels." Also, the rival thief Kaito could incapacitate the player and steal all of their equipment for their own use. Kaito could have also discovered where the rest of the player's gear was and use it for herself. Picassio would have also had several multiplayer modes, such as a head to head against another player, team based cooperative versus mode and another option called "capture the art", that we can speculate could have been similar to classic "capture the flag" mode in FPSs but with paintings to steal. Unfortunately the project got radically changed halfway through development when the company boss saw Shenmue and decided that Picassio needed to be more similar to it. The game then turned into a half adventure, half stealth type game but this new version didn't get any further than some character / level designs before getting cancelled. Unfortunately Promethean Designs fell into severe financial difficulty and employees weren't being paid for months. Subsequently they all left to work elsewhere and Promethean Designs went bust, filing for bankruptcy: their last released game was Aqua GT for Dreamcast and PlayStation in 2000.

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RAVEN BLADE

Article by: Sam Batten

Raven Blade was a RPG adventure developed by Retro Studios, where work on the game started back in 1999. It was planned to release on the Nintendo GameCube on an unspecified date, though it never quite made it to the final stages of development. The game was conceived by Steve Barcia and designed by David Cook, and it was said to be inspired by Michael Moorcock's fantasy book Elric of Melnibone. The two main designer behind Raven Blade had some great experience in creating story driven adventures prior to Raven Blade. Steve Barcia originally founded Simtex Studios Inc., where he developed such games as Master of Magic and Master of Orion. When Nintendo restructured Retro Studios, Barcia was brought in to replace the former founder-turned-president. David Cook started his work in the gaming industry in the 80's at TSR, where he worked primarily on Dungeons and Dragons. He then moved on to video games in the mid 90's with titles like Fallout 2. Even though Raven Blade was conceived in 1999, it was first showcased to the public at E3 in 2001, with a short video and a few screenshots of its world and characters. It was said to combine RPG style magic with real time battles. On top of that, they also announced that all sword fighting would be modelled after real sword combat and martial arts. Not much of the plot of this game was released to the public other than a short and very generic synopsis. The player would play as an unnamed hero who wielded the legendary sword "raven blade" in an adventure to rid the world of evil. The main antagonist was the evil BeastLord, and as you can probably imagine, they would have been the final boss of the game. The game underwent a few name changes before they finally settled on Raven Blade. Originally, the game was called Retro Studios RPG, then it changed to Rune Blade, and then once more to its final title. The title wasn't the only part of Raven Blade to change throughout development. The gameplay itself followed the typical turn based JRPG format, though that was altered later to the real time combat that was showcased. When the game was shown at E3, it highly impressed both critics and fans alike. Many viewers found the game to be exceptionally beautiful, stating that the in-game character models were extremely detailed for the GameCube. Unfortunately, the footage shown was not in-game, but mockup of the full potential of the game created by the game engine (like most 'gameplay' advertisements today). What was not shown at E3 was the real state of Raven Blade: a fragmented game that lacked most of its planned features. The project was plagued with technical issues, specifically in the battle system department. Insider sources said that Retro Studios had diverted a large amount of time to the in-game combat and still struggled to get a decent battle system working. These same sources explain that the battle system was planned to be only a small part of the game, but the amount of time diverted to it resulted in a lack of development in all other areas of the game. It seems that Retro had been finding it very difficult to convert their awesome character and level art into an actual playable product. Despite all these issues in developing Raven Blade, there were actually a lot of other things happening between Nintendo and Retro Studios. As stated before in

this book, when Retro was founded they immediately started work on four games: Action-Adventure (Working title), NFL Retro Football, Car Combat / Thunder Rally and Raven Blade. Only later did Retro started working on Metroid Prime. The working environment was described as chaotic by Nintendo executives and many complained about the progress of the games that were being made. After some time and changes in the development teams at Retro Studios, Nintendo decided to cancel development on most of the games; there were about twenty layoffs and any remaining people moved on to the Metroid Prime project. In a quote to IGN from Nintendo: “Retro, along with Nintendo, has decided its most effective approach as a videogame developer is to focus on Metroid and give it the attention the franchise deserves, to do that, they refined staffing and are laying off 26 people, mainly the team that worked on Raven Blade. Raven Blade is now cancelled." This was no secret and Nintendo was very upfront with their reasoning for cancelling the game, as can be seen in another statement form an NOA representative: "Raven Blade has been cancelled, it was a business decision and was made clearly based on the need to focus on Metroid and to ensure that it is a great game. We wanted to consolidate the resources that would have been needed to finish Raven Blade." This move by Nintendo would turn out to be a very successful endeavor; Metroid Prime released in November 2002 and was a critically acclaimed hit. It sold over two million copies worldwide and earned more than $50 million in revenue, while receiving numerous game of the year awards in the process. As unfortunate as it may be, we do have all the canceled Retro games to thank for the success of Metroid. By looking at the quality of Metroid Prime we can only dream about what Raven Blade could have been if Nintendo gave it the same attention and resources.

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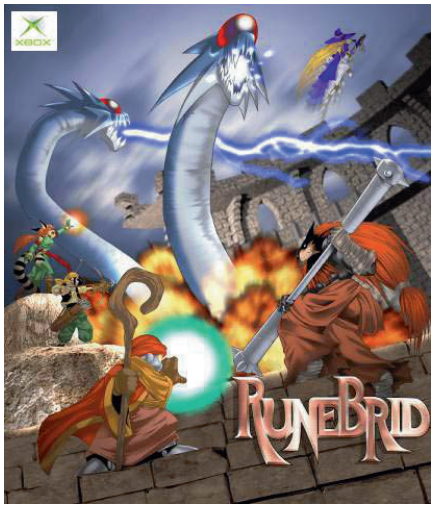
RUNEBRID

Article by: James Alan Griffiths

There will always be certain details about unreleased games we’ll never know, but in the case of “Runebrid” or “Runebird”, an unreleased title for Microsoft’s original Xbox, even its official name is up for debate. I’ll refer to the game as “Runebrid” for the duration of this article, since that was what it was reported to be called in the one confirmation of its existence - a promotional poster for the game, which was revealed to be in development in 2002 Microsoft made an impressive, but ultimately futile attempt to attract Japanese gamers towards their new and brave foray into console gaming. There doesn't seem to be an English translation from Japanese for the word “Brid”, but interestingly it’s not the first time it's been used in gaming. The Japan-only SNES game “Accele Brid”, a 3D mech shooter, features the word, though there's no known connection between the two games. However, given the obscure nature of the word, it's hard to believe that there isn't a link of some kind between the two. What we do know about Runebrid was that it was probably going to be a big deal for Japanese Xbox gamers. The producer for the project was Kenji Orimo, a man with legendary credentials - with a co-Director credit on fabled SRPG Shining Force on Megadrive/Genesis, as well as the SNES SRPG “FEDA: Emblem of Justice”, plus being the map designer for both Alundra games. Orimo had also previously written the story for “Landstalker: Treasure of King Nole” and a text adventure for Sega’s Phantasy



Star series. The character designer for the game was Yoshitaka Tamaki, the artist behind many of the Shining Force titles, “Darkstalker”, “Alundra” and the lesser-known RPG, “Fangs: The Saga of Wolf Blood” by Enix. Runebrid was going to be a brand new strategy RPG created by some of the key players during the golden age of Japanese role playing video games. The developers at Max Entertainment were led by Orimo, and the company Takuyo would be responsible for publishing the game, along with two other titles (“Master Slave”, “Magi Death Fight”) announced at the same time, at the Tokyo Games Show in the Spring of 2001. Of these three, only one would make it to market, the Japan only Magi Death Fight: Mahuo Gakuen, in 2002. The game’s announcement, development, and eventual quiet demise can all be attributed to the hope and perception of Microsoft’s Xbox, which was originally met with disdain by the Japanese gaming public and those within the Japanese games industry. The controller was too big for people whose hands were typically smaller than their Western counterparts, and the Direct-X PC architecture was so different everything that had come before. However, the Japanese gaming industry was too big and influential for Microsoft to ignore and they had to think of something to avoid losing this very lucrative market. Realizing a compromise of some sort would be necessary, Microsoft’s CEO (and at that point richest man in the world) Bill Gates gave a memorable keynote speech in which he announced the console would be shipped with a new, smaller controller in Japan. In addition to this, many Japanese gaming giants were revealed to be on board to develop and publish Xbox ports and exclusives alike. Runebrid wasn’t the biggest announcement in the software showcase (Sega, for example, would offer a massive 11 games for the Xbox) but with such a talented development team, led by one of the fathers of Japanese SRPGs, the game could have been a new masterpiece for fans of strategy titles. Sadly, this attempt to right Microsoft’s wrongs with the Xbox was too little too late, and the brand would never recover in the far east. It's likely that Runebrid's funding was cut when it became obvious that the Xbox's sales would not recover in the region. How far along the game was or if any playable footage exists, will probably never be known. However, the promotional poster suggests that it would have promised all of the typical elements of a great classic role playing game.

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SKIES OF ARCADIA 2

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The original Skies of Arcadia (AKA Eternal Arcadia) was released in late 2000/early 2001 on Dreamcast, and soon became a cult hit among JRPG fans. The game was developed by Overworks, a SEGA team composed of numerous legendary developers and designers, including Rieko Kodama, Shuntaro Tanaka, and Noriyoshi Ohba; all of whom worked on notable RPGs, such as the Phantasy Star series, Magic Knight Rayearth, Wonder Boy in Monster Land, and the Sakura Taisen series. Hype was high and the final game was one of the best Japanese RPGs released in the '00s. Unfortunately, though, it did not sell well enough on the Dreamcast (only around 100,000 copies), due to the console's early discontinuation in 2001, and its small user base. Sega was still confident about their sky-pirates project, though. They developed enhanced ports of the game for PS2 and GameCube with added features in an attempt to sell more copies and earn back some of the money spent to create the game. The GameCube version was released in December 2002 in Japan under the title “Skies of Arcadia Legends” but the PS2 port was canceled, causing many RPG fans to miss out on the game. As

with most Nintendo consoles, third party titles saw little success on the GameCube, and few owners of the system had an interest in RPG titles. As a result, the GameCube re-release of Skies of Arcadia bombed even harder than the Dreamcast original. Before losing all faith in the game, Sega and Overworks were planning a sequel to Skies of Arcadia, as stated in interviews with developers from the original team. In June of 2001, IGN asked Noriyoshi Ohba about Skies of Arcadia 2. In response, he stated that "We're considering a sequel to [Skies of Arcadia]. Regarding which platform, we're still evaluating it." In September 2002, before Skies of Arcadia Legends was published, Rieko Kodama told Gamespy that work on the sequel was still not yet started, but they really wanted to do it in the future: "I would love to make a sequel, but we're really not working on it yet. [...] We don't know what platform we would make a sequel for, but GameCube has priority since Legends is coming out for it." In March 2004, Ohba announced that they started some planning on the second game: "The Skies of Arcadia sequel is in the planning stages at the moment". In late 2004, Rieko talked again about Skies of Arcadia 2 in an interview with the German magazine Man!ac (issue 1 / 2005) in which she said: "We had plans, but the other team members are currently working on other projects such as "Sakura Taisen" – this means Skies of Arcadia 2 is currently on hold. Anyway I would be very glad about a new episode with the sky pirates". In 2003, Overworks was absorbed into SEGA WOW, and only a year later the team was split again because of another Sega company restructure. People that worked on Skies of Arcadia were scattered across multiple different studios. As far as we were able to gather, not much was ever done for Skies of Arcadia 2, but at least a few ideas and concepts seem to have been brainstormed by the team, who were still hoping to release a sequel on GameCube or Playstation 2. In 2006 Nintendo and Sony released their new consoles (Wii, PS3), and any plans Sega had for a new Skies of Arcadia RPG on GameCube or PS2 would never see the light of day. Even without a sequel, love for Skies of Arcadia is still strong at Sega. The game's three main protagonists: Vyse, Aika and Fina, were added as bonus characters in Valkyria Chronicles, originally released in 2008 on PS3. Vyse is also a playable character in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed, released in 2012 for various consoles and PC, and one of the game's tracks, Rogue's Landing, is based on Skies of Arcadia's world.

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THE MAGICAL NINJA: JIRAIYA KENZAN

Article by: Jade Avis

The Magical Ninja: Jiraiya Kenzan (also known as Magical Ninja Ji Rai Ya) was an action-platformer game developed for PlayStation 2 by Capcom Production Studio 3 in 2002-2003. It was showcased at the Tokyo Game Show in 2003 where some character designs, made by Susumu Matsushita, and a trailer (that seems to have disappeared) were revealed. After this show, the game was never heard of again and consequently scrapped. Not much is known about gameplay for Jiraiya Kenzan aside from the player controlling ninjas who could walk on water, hang from ceilings, and even disappear in a puff of smoke. The core mechanic for this game was the ability to summon beasts that fight alongside the player, which was influenced by the Japanese folklore of Jiraiya Goketsu Monogatari (literally translated as "The Tale of the Gallant Jiraiya") who was a shapeshifting ninja able to summon giant toads. Local co-op multiplayer allowed the second player to either fight as a ninja or as a beast alongside the main ninja.. As the game would go on, the player would encounter bosses who they would defeat in order to unlock more beasts to use in combat. The game's storyline was simple – the bosses were part of an evil organization called Ojamato and it was up to Jiraiya and the other ninjas to stop them. While most of the fighting would take place on the ground, special levels included battling inside a plane and a boat. Capcom Production Studio 3, the aforementioned developer, was one of six Capcom studios that were initially used as 'planning rooms' for game concepts, but split off in 2002 when it was assigned to different games. It's responsible for game series such as Mega Man, Resident Evil and UFC. In 2004 and 2005, Studio 3 developed Mega Man X: Command Mission, Glass Rose, and Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie's Revenge, which could be the reason that The Magical Ninja: Jiraiya Kenzan was cancelled. These games were all well-made, so it's possible that the studio decided to focus resources on them instead of Jiraiya Kenzan. Sadly, the true reasons for why this game was cancelled have never been told, and most likely never will. Capcom Production Studio 3 recently worked on ports / remakes of Final Fight and Super Street Fighter II for Wii U, plus the HD remake of Resident Evil Zero for PC, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360 and Xbox One, released in 2016.

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TOO HUMAN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Too Human may not have been the best game on the Xbox 360 when it was finally released in 2008, but it remains one of the most interesting projects because of its overly long, ambitious and troubled development. The game was created by Silicon Knights, a team that became popular with Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain (PlayStation, 1996) and Eternal Darkness (GameCube, 2002), it was originally announced at E3 1999, and planned to be published for the original PlayStation. Early concepts of the project had already been created way before Blood Omen, in 1993: as said by Denis Dyack, former leader of Silicon Knights, the "Soul Reaver" was actually a weapon in Too Human before they decided to move it over to Legacy of Kain during its development. Too Human on the first Sony console would have been a massive project, spanned over 4 CD-ROMs, with an intricate storyline, a complex gameplay mix of action, adventure, stealth and RPG, hours of full motion videos to tell its story and a 3D graphic that would have took the PlayStation to its limits. Actually Too Human started as a 3/4 top down shooter, somehow similar to Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain, but with 3D characters on 2D pre-rendered backgrounds, much like Resident Evil. When insiders saw this early version of Too Human in 1998, they said that it looked beautiful for its time. Unfortunately Silicon Knights never published any screenshots from the 3/4 top down version of the game, but at some point during the development they decided to go full 3D and basically start again with a new engine. A few former Silicon Knights developers remember that Sony was impressed with the project, and they were sending funds to the company to make sure that Too Human would have been released as a PlayStation exclusive. It's possible that they were hoping for a new Metal Gear Solid. Unfortunately, Too Human was never seen again on the PlayStation: soon Nintendo announced an exclusive partnership with Silicon Knights and all their future projects would have been released on Nintendo consoles. After investing money in Silicon Knights and with only a year of development on the new, fully 3D version of Too Human, without a formal contract Sony had to say goodbye to the game. Too Human made a new debut at Space World 2000, when it was shown with a FMV as one of the first titles announced for Nintendo's GameCube. The project was still similar to the original 32 bit version: an ambitious sci-fi, cyber punk videogame, which would have merged together titles of the calibre of Deus Ex and Metal Gear Solid. Silicon Knights wanted to create an open world sandbox game with a never seen before freedom of choice. Gamers would have been able to fully choose how to play by improving the protagonist's body and mind. This would have been done with cybernetic enhancements: upgrading his speed, strength and

firepower one would have been able to play Too Human as an exciting action game, killing even the most dangerous enemies with only a few shots and moving heavy objects to open new passages, while upgrading hacking abilities, charisma and stealth. One would have been able to silently explore the world without even being noticed by enemies or to convince them to switch sides simply by talking. Too Human's story was set in a distant future, 2450 AD, and from the few 3D renders published during its life as a GameCube project we can see that it would have had a pretty interesting style with dark and mystical characters and technology, something that could have been inspired by the classic pen and paper RPG Cyberpunk 2020. The main protagonist was John Franks, an undercover police officer that would have found himself with the same doubts and questions that were risen in movies such as Blade Runners and Ghost in the Shell: how can we define what is human and what is not? In an interview with Denis Dyack by IGN from 2003 he said "The status of Too Human is good. We're not going to make any announcements on Too Human until the time is right. When we can, you know I want to talk about that more than anything else, but it's just not the time yet. Sorry." Unfortunately neither Nintendo or Silicon Knights ever shown any in-game screenshots or videos from the GameCube version of Too Human and in 2004 they ended their exclusive collaboration, probably because of the low-than-expected sales of their released games (Eternal Darkness and Metal Gear Solid: the Twin Snakes). In mid-2005 Silicon Knights announced a new partnership with Microsoft, and they would have published a full Too Human trilogy for Xbox 360. The released version of Too Human is nothing compared to the ambitious project it was on PlayStation and GameCube: it became a linear action RPG, set in a strange sci-fi Norse mythology instead of in a cyberpunk world, and John Franks was nowhere to be found. The game was poorly received by gamers and critics, and it was a commercial failure, especially with an estimated cost of 60-100 million dollars. Even more problems were waiting for Too Human, as Silicon Knights decided to develop it on the 360 using Epic's Unreal Engine 3, a choice that make them to fall into a not-fully-clear hole of lawsuits, landing on a fine of $4.45 million against SK. The court told Silicon Knights to destroy all unsold copies of their games built with Unreal Engine 3, meaning that Too Human could not have been sold ever again and the planned trilogy was never completed. This was the end of a company already damaged by various financial issues: in May 2014 Silicon Knights filed for bankruptcy and closed down. All prototypes of Too Human for PlayStation and GameCube have probably been lost forever.

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TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

Article by: Tristan Avery

Scheduled to be released in Japan in 2003, True Fantasy Live Online was to be a flagship MMORPG for the then brand new online service for the Xbox, Xbox Live. The game was to be developed by Japanese developer Level-5, who had previously had great commercial and critical success with Dark Cloud and Dark Cloud 2 for the PlayStation 2. Microsoft tasked Level-5 to create an expansive MMO that would draw in players to their new service, particularly in the Japanese market where sales of the Xbox were less than ideal. While the official storyline of the game was never officially released, Microsoft gave a brief description stating that the player would be able to join thousands of other players in order to battle evil creatures that threaten the innocent. Early stills and gameplay footage reveal that the game was to feature a unique art style with cel shaded

graphics and a distinct anime inspired look. Along with the unique visual style the game was to include a variety of new gameplay mechanics to help set itself apart from the other 3D MMOs at the time such as Final Fantasy XI and Lineage II. One such feature was the dynamic character creation system. Not only would the player have a range of choices of how to customize their character, such as gender and facial features, but their character's appearance and stats would also change depending on how the game was played. For example if the player took up a strength based job, such as blacksmithing, their character would gain muscle mass and get a strength increase, but lose speed as a result. Another dynamic feature was the ongoing history of the world. The player would be able to choose to start out in one of four countries, each with its own unique history and ongoing story. Throughout the game the player would be updated on the advancement of the storyline, and their gameplay could change depending on what happened. The game would have a variety of classes to choose from, ranging from combat oriented classes like adventurer to support classes such as a chef. There was an optional guild system in which the player could join a guild of the profession they chose and perform quests for them in order to move up the ranks. Once the player reached the top level of their guild they would gain access to unique quests. The player would also be able to add their own "signature" to their equipment and customize their own home. Various modes of transportation were also going to be available such as horseback, ship, carriage, flying broomsticks and dragons. The first death knell for the game occurred on March 2004 when, after a series of lackluster trailers that debuted at the Tokyo Game Show and E3 in 2003, the game was delayed until winter of 2004. Just a few months later on June 2004 Level-5 sent a press release stating that the game was canceled. Level-5 president Akihiro Hino embellished on the cancellation on the company's website stating: "The game had been showcased to the media, the world of TFLO was already complete, and within it, it was possible to live a virtual life to a degree. We continued development with the aim of making a network game that we ourselves would want to play. However, development required more time than expected, and as a result, the amount of time people would be able to play slipped considerably". Ultimately the game failed because Level-5 was too far reaching in their ambitions compared to the time restraints and demands that Microsoft put forth for them. One of the most challenging was the seamless inclusion of voice chat, which Microsoft was adamant the game included instead of the more cumbersome type chat. This, along with other networking problems, proved to be very difficult to the

team due to their inexperience in the field and the technical limitations at the time. The decision on cancellation ultimately came when the delays that would have been needed in order to release the 100% completed product became too far reaching. While Level-5 never worked with Microsoft again they continued to have critical and commercial success with IPs for the PlayStation and Nintendo such as the Ni No Kuni series, the Professor Layton series and several of the extremely popular Dragon Quest games. They are still an active company today, with their most recent hit being the Yo-Kai Watch series.

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TWISTED METAL BLACK 2: HARBOR CITY

Article by: Matt Redmond, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Twisted Metal Black 2: Harbor City is the cancelled sequel to the original Twisted Metal Black released for Playstation 2 in 2001, a car combat game developed by Incognito Entertainment (a team also known for War of the Monsters PS2 and Warhawk PS3). For Harbor City, Incognito planned huge levels that would have been interconnected with one another, rather than the single, divided levels found in the original Twisted Metal Black. The setting and gameplay would have been inspired by open world games, such as the GTA series. Other than vehicular based combat, players would have been able to get out of the cars to explore the world and shoot enemies in third person, controlling main characters such as Sweet Tooth and Preacher. Though details on "open world" levels and the on-foot elements are scarce, it is assumed that the overall game would have played similar to Twisted Metal Black. Even if this unreleased sequel was never officially announced, Incognito Entertainment wrote about it in the bonus section of Twisted Metal: Head On, released for PSP in 2005 and for PS2 in 2008. An urban legend was made up to explain the cancellation of Harbor City, telling that the project was canned due to the tragic deaths of six key developers in a plane crash. In the following years David Jaffe (the main director on most Twisted Metal games) confirmed that the story was just a joke to give Harbor City's demise a more "tragic and mysterious" background. We can speculate that the real cause of the game's cancellation has to be found in the downfall of the car-combat genre in early '00. Along with some details on the lost sequel, the PSP and Playstation 2 versions of Head On also got some bonus modes taken from Harbor City. In the PSP game you can play the "Sweet Tour" mode in which to explore two levels on foot to learn interesting facts about Twisted

Metal's development. In the PS2 version there's a bonus section titled "Twisted Metal: Lost" in which players can try 4 beta levels that were originally created for Harbor City. These areas don't have the open world interconnection planned for TM:B2 and they are just a small part of the cancelled game, but at least we can take a look at some of the environments that were already created before the project was cancelled. After releasing Warhawk for PS3, in 2009 Incognito Entertainment was closed down as most of its staff quit the team for various reasons. In 2007, David Jaffe and Scott Cambell (former President of Incognito) had already left the company to create their own studio "Eat Sleep Play" and the remaining developers later went on to create LightBox Interactive. In 2012, Eat Sleep Play released a PS3 Twisted Metal reboot in collaboration with Sony, with online multiplayer up to 16 players, but without many of the new features that were planned for Harbor City, such as the interconnected levels and on-foot combat.

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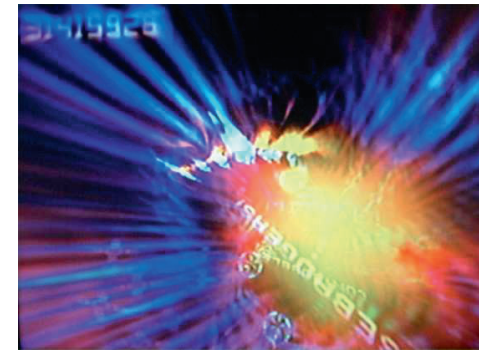
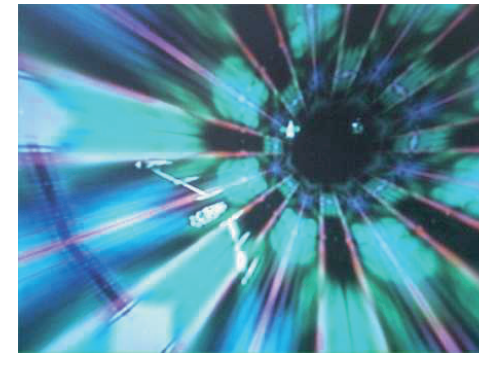
UNITY

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





Jeff Minter is the founder of Llamasoft, and he's an old-school indie developer that started his career creating demos on his Commodore PET computer at the end of the 1970s. He's the designer of many weird, psychedelic shoot 'em up and cult games from the early days of home computers (Sinclair, Commodore, Spectrum), such as Gridrunner, Attack of the Mutant Camels and Iridis Alpha, other than the popular reboot of Tempest and Defender for Atari Jaguar. Jeff is also a lover of light synthesizers and he created some of the most lisergic music visualization softwares with his popular Virtual Light Machine series that was pre-installed as the default CD-player / music visualization program in Jaguar CD Rom, Nuon and Xbox 360. In January 2003, Llamasoft and Lionhead Studios announced a partnership to create the most ambitious abstract shoot 'em up ever for Nintendo GameCube. Somehow similar to what United Game Artists did with REZ on the Dreamcast, but using what Minter learned from years of developing light synthesizers, to design a true "musical trip shooter" in which levels and enemies would have evolved in real time following its electronic soundtrack. This project would have been called Unity, because Jeff Minter wanted to bring together his biggest loves: light synthesisers, music and shoot'em ups. It was Pete Hawley, fan of Llamasofts psychedelic shooters and Head of Production at Lionhead Studios at the time, who introduced the concept of working with Minter to Peter Molyneux. As we can read in the February 2003 issue of Edge Magazine (which had Unity on its cover and a 8-page special about it), during a meeting to decide if there were any interesting original games to fund. Pete said "Well, Jeff Minter, we'll buy him some hardware, we'll pay him a certain amount, and give him a year to see what happens". The Lionhead board voted yes and that was the start of the Unity project. Jeff worked on Unity for about 2 years, in which he shared many images and videos from the early prototypes with the Llamasoft community in their forum. This abstract GameCube shooter would have been a mindblender color and light trip, with the game's level that would have moved and transformed following the music rhythm and psychedelic enemies this would have then evolved in someway through the different areas. As we can read in an interview by Gamasutra with Jeff: "Not only did we

have the light synthesis generator -- which was actually working -- but the whole idea was going to be genetic evolutionary algorithms controlling everything, and it was just too huge, really" [...] " It had this whole idea of evolution going on, and the way you played it would change the way the enemies were constructed and how they behaved. It didn't know whether it wanted to be Defender or Spore, and you know how long it's taken that guy to develop Spore, so if we'd stuck with that I'd still be doing it now." From some of the released videos we can see jellyfish-like enemies and an in-game light synthesiser editor (called Virtual Light Machine 3) to change the style of the level while playing, even by multiple people at the same time. As wrote at Llamasoft official website: "With VLM-3 I returned to my roots, and made a completely user-performed light synthesiser, rather than the primarily audio-driven "visualizer"style of VLMs 0, 1 and 2. The Gamecube's fast 3D hardware enabled me to take effects generation out of a strictly 2D plane, as it had always been before, and enabled me to map it onto 3D environments. The major innovation of VLM-3 was that I made the lightsynth *multi-user* - for the first time a group of people could work together to orchestrate and create the display. [...] Over the following year VLM-3 became more refined - I intended for it not only to generate textures and environments for Unity, but also to be unlockable in the game as a usable lightsynth in its own right." Unity's gameplay would have had players to shoot enemies in tube-on-rails level somehow similar to the ones seen in Tempest, open-range levels to fly around freely in an abstract planet, side scrolling levels as in old-school shmups and other types of camera perspectives to differentiate the feel of the game in different situations, for example during boss battles. The soundtrack for Unity was not finalized yet, but from what it was rumored at the time and from the songs used in a few tech demos, music from British electronic group Underworld could have been one of the choices. Unfortunately in December 2004, Llamasoft and Lionhead officially announced Unity's cancellation, because they would have not been able to complete it as they wanted to, in the required timeframe (GameCube was near its ending, Nintendo's new console, the Wii, was announced only a few months later). As posted by Minter on Llamasoft's forum: "It's been a horrible decision for us to have to make, but in the end we've had to make it. Basically, although I've built a shedload of stuff for Unity in the past couple of years it's become clear that getting it all together into something that I'd be happy to call Unity and put my name to was going to take a lot of time and effort both from myself and the guys at Lionhead, and realistically it was becoming unlikely that it'd be finished in time for anyone to want to publish it on Gamecube. The alternative would be a rush job and we simply didn't want to do that. Best to call it a day. Obviously I'm disappointed -- I've put two years of my life into this and I was as desperate to play Unity as much as you were, and I understand fully just how disappointed you all are. All I can say is that I was doing this for you guys more than anyone and I'm sorry if you feel I've let you down." Pete Hawley, Minter's original supporter, had also left Lionhead Studios in September 2003 to became Development Director at Sony. Jeff carried on for a while in Pete's absence, but by the end of 2004 it was clear just how close Microsoft and Lionhead Studios were becoming; Microsoft was giving ideas of what they'd like Lionhead to develop for them and how they'd fund those games, but unfortunately a psychedelic shoot 'em up didn't fit in with their market plans. Microsoft still loved the look of this abstract project so they decided to support Jeff Minter to evolve all the works he made with the Virtual Light Machine 3 used in Unity to create a new music visualization software to use in their new console, the Xbox 360. That's how the Neon light synthesizer installed in each Xbox 360 console was born, from the ashes of Llamasoft's cancelled GameCube shooter. Virtual Light Machine 3 was also used to develop another Jeff Minter's game, Space Giraffe, released in August 2007 for Xbox Live Arcade. Unfortunately Space Giraffe was a much more linear game than what Unity would have been, following the usual Tempest 2000 formula. Recently Llamasoft has released TxK for PlayStation Vita in 2014 and a "Minotaur Rescue" tech demo / game for Oculus Rift VR: we can only hope that one day Jeff could be able to fulfill his "unity" dream.

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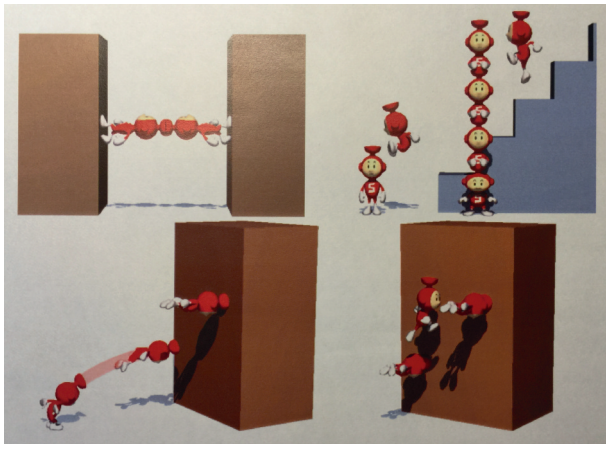
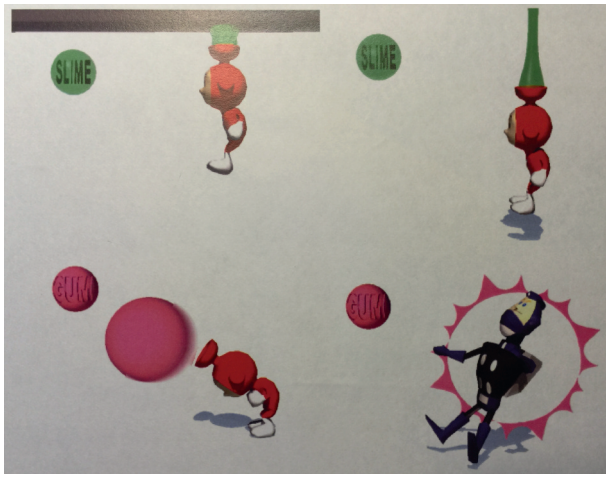
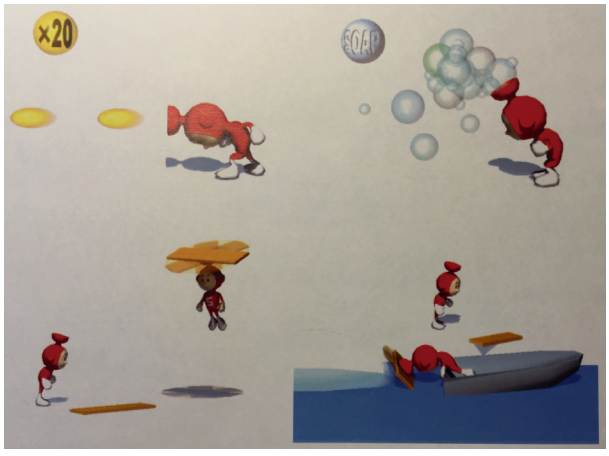
BUCIYO 5 (THE BUMBLING 5)

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





In only about 4 years of existence, United Game Artists managed to became one of the most original and beloved Sega teams ever existed, especially for Dreamcast fans. Originally founded as Sega AM9 and lead by Tetsuya Mizuguchi, they had a portfolio of released games composed of just 2 new Dreamcast titles and a sequel (Space Channel 5 - 1999, Rez - 2001, Space Channel 5 Part 2 - 2002). UGA were for sure a talented and inventive studio. Blending catchy music with beautiful, sometimes abstract 3D visuals, both Space Channel 5 and Rez are now considered cult classics and often used as examples to show how games can really be art. Synesthesia, the phenomenon felt when multiple senses are activated after the stimulation of a different one, was an inspiration and a game design objective for the United Game Artists team, mixing graphic, audio and gameplay so to suscitate an abundance of feelings and sensations. It's easy to imagine how new games from UGA would have been acclaimed by their fans, but unfortunately things did not go as planned. After Sega discontinued the Dreamcast on March 2001, United Game Artists and the other Sega teams started working on the competitor's consoles, creating new titles and porting their old classic or unfinished games to Xbox, Playstation 2 and Gamecube. In the following months UGA also released ports of Rez and Space Channel 5 for PS2, while they started developing two new projects: Rez 2 and Buciyo 5. Buciyo 5 was the new, original project by UGA planned to be a Gamecube exclusive, but not much was ever revealed about it. Sega quietly announced the game in January 2003 as a "New Project by United Game Artists" along with other titles such as F-Zero GX by Amusement Vision and Skies of Arcadia Legends by Overworks. At the time Jake Kazdal was the only American working directly at UGA on Space Channel 5 and Rez as an artist, animator and designer, and he was the only one from the Rez team on the early prototype of Bukicyo 5, before a bunch more staff came on for the full gameplay prototype. Jake was featured in an article published in January 2014 by Edge Magazine: "After completing Rez, Kazdal worked on a GameCube adventure for a year, a prototype that was never released". Still without knowing much more about Buciyo 5, we tried our luck and got in contact with Jake, who after getting full permission from both Mizuguchi-san and Yuda-san to openly discuss the project, helped us to preserve some more memories about this UGA's lost masterpiece. Jake told us that "After Rez shipped, the rest of the Rez team went into a sort of discovery mode on what they would do with a Rez 2, and if that was even going to happen, they wanted to wait a bit and see how sales were. I was a big fan of my first director at Sega, Takashi Yuda, who was the creator and director of Space Channel 5. I had worked under him for my first year at Sega in Tokyo on that project and was just a big fan of his game design theory and style in general. He was starting a small team to prototype an idea for an action / adventure on Gamecube, so I asked to join him for a time, while the Rez team figured out what they wanted to do for the next project." According to the information we managed to gather, we imagine Buciyo 5 (which roughly translates to "The Bumbling 5") as a mix between Mega Man, Metal Gear Solid, Pikmin, Tokobot and Ape Escape 3. Sounds interesting? It sure does. Players would have been able to choose between 5 red robots, visually somewhat in the vein of Mega Man in terms of cute robotic characters with human-like faces. Each robot had a different peculiarity: voice, eyes, nose, ears, and brain. This would have allowed different gameplay mechanics and approaches to the game's levels, as explained by Jake: "So one [robot] could mimic voices exactly, one could see really well, one could smell really well, one could hear really well, and one was a genius. You would use these 5 together to



infiltrate enemy bases and take on the enemies as carefully as possible. They also had plungers on their heads, and you could jump on an enemy head-first, and flip him around with your plunger head! Or jump onto the ceiling and hold still as enemies walked underneath you, etc. It was pretty slapstick, and really cute, had a jamming soundtrack and was Yuda-san's brainchild that we cranked on for a while". These cute little robots could jump one on another to create some kind of robo-tower to reach higher places, using their plungers they could throw and stick themselves on a wall to create new platforms, shot different kinds of balls against enemies, create soap bubbles, rotate wood planks to fly or as a propeller for a boat, and much more. The Buciyo 5 team first created a concept video to internally pitch the game to Sega HQ - and it was a success: the project was greenlighted and they started working on a prototype. Once Rez 2 was officially abandoned - as the first one didn't sell enough to warrant a sequel - more developers switched to Buciyo 5 and in about a year they were able to create an awesome playable demo, showcasing the main features of the game and its unique style. Jake remembers "[...] working late nights, putting together a badass gameplay demo that was beautiful, super interesting and quirky, and designed by a bunch of *really* intelligent, talented game designers who really believed in the project. " [...] "It was at this time that I decided to move away from animation and really start focusing on environmental art, and Yuda-san had worked on all these Genesis era classics like Castle of Illusion and others, and I was stoked to be able to study with someone of that pedigree. We looked at a lot of classic Disney films for lighting and composition reference, and I fell in love with pre-production and concept painting during this project." Unfortunately, as it often happens with the most original and interesting games, marketing decisions were going to kill off the project. Mike Fischer, VP at Sega America at the time, went to Japan to evaluate new Sega games for the American market and was not interested in a quirky, cute adventure game, like Buciyo 5 definitely was. Sega Japan said they would have stopped financing the project if the American branch wouldn't publish it in that area . So the plug was pulled: Buciyo 5 became another unseen game we'll never play. Of course United Game Artists were crushed when their last dream game was canned too. Rez 2 never made it past the pitch video phase, but Jake remembers "It was *sick*. Yokota-san, the art director of Rez, (and Rez 2, and Panzer Dragoon Saga) is a genius and it was an evolution of Area 5 from Rez. Insanity." It seems that, at the time, there was no place for such avant-garde, experimental games at Sega: not long after Buciyo 5 was cancelled, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, Katsumi Yokota, Ryuichi Hattori, Jake Kazdal and other key staff left the studio, and United Game Artists quickly ceased to be. Those that remained at Sega, merged with Sonic Team (and ended up working on the stylish DS games Feel The Magic: XY/XX and The Rub Rabbits!), and many of them are still there. In October 2003 Mizuguchi founded Q Entertainment along with Yokota and other former Sega developers to keep working on interesting music game hybrids and creating projects such as Lumines, Meteos, Every Extend Extra and Child of Eden. In 2009 Jake Kazdal founded his indie studio 17-BIT (formerly Haunted Temple Studios), releasing cult-following games such as Skulls of the Shogun and Galak-Z: The Dimensional. United Games Artists will always be remembered for having continued - till the end - to create original games following their own creativity: today their unique style is still kept alive by UGA's former members.

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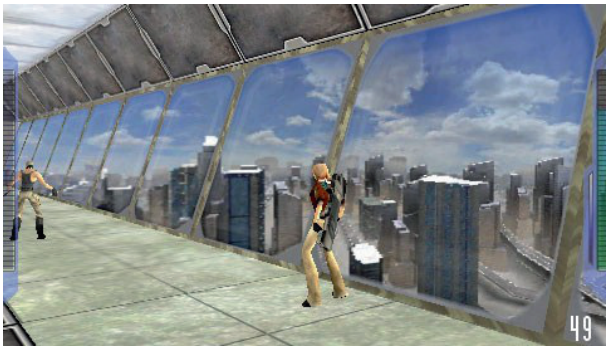
PlayStation Portable

Article by: Sam Batten

Sony first announced development on their handheld system the PSP at E3 2003, but it wasn't until May 2004 that the final console was revealed at a press conference. Later that year the PSP was released in Japan, while Europe and North American recieved it the following year. The PSP was released as a competitor to the Nintendo DS, and so it was designed to posses many more features than its main rival, boasting a large 4.3 inch screen and multimedia capabilities (such as the TV tuner and the ability to play films on the device). The PSP could even connect to the internet and the PlayStation 3 to play and download demos and games. Many people in the gaming community believed that the Sony PSP would finally remove Nintendo's dominance over the handheld market since the release of the first Game Boy. The PSP was a critically acclaimed piece of hardware from Sony and was immediately considered a cult system, selling more than 80 million units. But that wasn't nearly enough to compete with Nintendo's 154 million units sold. Just like the previous generation of handhelds, superior technology did not translate into better sales. There were many iterations of Sony's handheld, starting with the PSP-1000 (also known as the PSP "Phat"), then evolving into the slimmer PSP-2000. A third iteration of the device was launched in 2008, dubbed the PSP-3000, which included a built-in microphone and a new type of screen. The PSP-Go was then released in 2009, foregoing the usage of UMDs for digital versions of games stored on the device. Finally, there was the PSP-E1000, a budget version of the original handheld. The PSP had a 10 year lifespan until Sony finally discontinued it in 2014. Throughout this ten year period, the system amassed over 960 games and over 670 films and TV shows. Some of the critically acclaimed and most popular titles on the system were the Monster Hunter series (2005 - 2010), Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (2005), Wipeout Pure (2005), Daxter (2006), Tekken: Dark Resurrection (2006), Patapon (2007), Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII (2007), Final Fantasy Tactics (2007), God of War: Chains of Olympus (2008), Dissidia: Final Fantasy (2008), Gran Turismo (2009), Gundam VS Gundam Next Plus (2009), Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together (2010), Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep (2010), and Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker (2010). This giant library of games was a double-edged sword for the PSP. They were great games that helped sell the system, but at the same time many players found these games to be better suited for the PS3 instead of the PSP. The DS, on the other hand, was its own platform that possessed its own huge game library (over 2,000). Nintendo's games were tailored to a casual audience, which was at an all-time high thanks to the Wii, helping them sell over double the units of the PSP. PSP owners were still able to enjoy niche and original exclusive titles such as Gurumin (2006), Crush (2007), Kenka Bancho (2008), Hammerin' Hero (2008), Disgaea Infinite (2009), Persona 3 (2009), Half-Minute Hero (2009), Ys Seven (2009), Jikandia: The Timeless Land (2010), ClaDun (2010), God Eater (2010), ZHP: Unlosing Ranger VS Darkdeath Evilman (2010) and Chikyuu Boueigun 2 (2011). Piracy could have also hindered the PSP as it was easily and quickly hacked. Owners of the hacked handheld could play homebrew games and download pirated games directly onto the hardware in a ROM format and play them for free. Sony tried to counteract this by upgrading the software continuously, but the device remained hacked for nearly all of its lifecycle. This could have seriously hampered game sales as it was extremely easy to do and was well documented online. While the PSP was still a successful handled, games sales were not as high as expected. The hype over the technology caused many developers to announce promising titles for the console, but as always, not all of them saw the light of day. In the following pages we collected some of the most interesting and relevant lost games we'll never play on our beloved PSP, to remember what could have been.

ADVENT SHADOW

Article by: Sam Batten, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Advent Shadow was planned to be the second chapter in the ill-fated Advent trilogy of action adventure games created by GlyphX Games. This PSP chapter was developed by Full Fat (a little known team that mostly worked on licensed portable games) and would have been published by Majesco in 2005. The overarching plot of the Advent series was created by Donald and Geremy Mustard, while the main screenplay was written by popular science fiction writers Orson Scott Card and Cameron Dayton. Unfortunately, the first chapter of the Advent saga, Advent Rising (Xbox and PC), was met with mediocre reviews and relatively low sales. However, it managed to amass a cult following of fans who found the rich lore and interesting world design more than worthy of praise, leading to the attempt at a sequel.

The campaign of Advent Shadow itself followed the mercenary pilot Marin Steel, controlled by the player, during an alien invasion risking the fate of humanity. In the course of the game, Marin would encounter Gideon Wyeth, the protagonist of Advent Rising, though it's unknown if the two protagonists would work together. Unfortunately, not much else is known about the plot. Based on footage and screenshots, there seemed to be a handful of playable environments. The most prominent of these setting was a space station orbiting a distant planet. Other screenshots show the main character in what appears to be a desert and a city setting, possibly on the aforementioned orbited planet, but it's not clear if the player would have been able to freely fly from place to place via spaceship or travel from one location to the other throughout the story. Combat in Advent Shadow followed the third-person shooter formula while implementing a new cover system in the process. In the revealed gameplay footage, the player is seen approaching a corner, pressing up against it, and then having the ability to look around/over it in order to survey the area and the enemies lurking around. Players would also have to traverse the areas by jumping on platforms, edging along small walkways, and scaling certain obstacles by wall jumping. Ken Gold of Majesco was quoted in saying that "The technical capabilities of the PSP system allow us to deliver to a handheld device, the cinematic experience that embodies the Advent Trilogy." The company was very confident in being able to make a lasting franchise, going as far as hinting that they already planned out most of the story for the entire trilogy. This would never be seen, however, as the trilogy (including Advent Shadow) was cancelled in 2005 due to financial difficulties following the low sales of Advent Rising and other games.

GlyphX Games and Majesco were forced to drop the project and re-evaluate their entire business model. This would come to be the lesser of the two blows suffered by Majesco. By the end of 2005, they revealed that they had made a loss of close to $71 million. This forced the company to cancel both the game tie-in for classic movie "Taxi Driver" and a new action/horror project titled Demonik, while also selling the rights to Ghost Rider and the Darkness. Majesco managed to stay afloat through all of this and continue to publish games to this day. Full Flat also publishes games today, though they've shifted to sports games on mobile platforms instead of shooters on the PSP. Even if Advent Rising ended with a cliffhanger, there is little chance that we'll ever see the resurgence of Advent Shadow or any other game of the planned trilogy. The series creators Donald and Geremy Mustard moved on to start ChAIR Entertainment as a subsidiary of Epic Games, creating such titles as Shadow Complex (XBLA, PSN, PC) and the successful Infinity Blade series for iOS. As of now, they've shown no indication of ever returning to the Advent storyline.

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EARTHWORM JIM

Article by: Sam Batten

At E3 2006, Atari announced that they had obtained the online and handheld rights for Earthworm Jim and that they planned to develop a range of video games over the following five years. The first of these was a new Earthworm Jim for the PSP. During the announcement there were rumors about the project being made with the help of designers from Shiny Entertainment that worked on the original two games, including Dave Perry, Doug TenNapel, Nick Bruty and Tommy Tallarico. However, a source that wished to remain anonymous said that the only original designer on the project was Dave Perry, though the new lead designer was a huge fan of the series. The game was initially believed to be a remake of the first Earthworm Jim, but it was then later revealed to contain mostly original content. The game was to retain the gameplay of the original, which was a 2D sidescrolling platformer where the player controls Jim across levels by running, jumping, swinging, and killing enemies with his gun. The game was going to use 3D graphics in a 2.5D viewpoint, with gameplay keeping true to the original platformers. The developers were also planning to have new features, including collecting different parts for Jim's power suit like gloves, boots, and armor. These upgrades were going to be a way to make parts of the levels easier, such as a speed boost upgrade making traversing a conveyor belt section easier. There was also a feature described that would allow the player to stop what they were doing and perform dance moves, though this was never seen in action. GamesRadar also mentioned that the game was to feature a full music / dancing mini game. Along with these single player additions, it was reported that there would be a two-player competitive mode, although there were no details released regarding what this would entail (a co-op mode up to 4 players was later added to the HD

remake of Earthworm Jim for Xbox 360 and PS3). The PSP game was said to have a total of eight separate levels. Only two were ever detailed, being a remake of "New Junk City" from the original game, and a new level called "The Birds and the Bees". This was set in a literal war between birds and bees and was said to contain points where Jim could change something in one part of the level to affect something else in another part of the area. By late 2006, Gamespot, GamesRadar and IGN were shown playable builds of the game, although it was running on a PS2 Dev Kit, before it was going to be moved onto the PSP. This means that the game had actually not been played on a PSP system and there could well have been an issue with making it work correctly on the portable console. The build that these sites were given was just a demo of the remade New Junk City level. Although the other level was described, none of these sites actually played it and they were only told about the features that it would possess. A source that worked at Shiny Entertainment said that New Junk City was the only one completely finished and there were 4 or 5 unfinished levels, though he claimed the game was about 80% complete. GamesRadar mentioned new features that Jim would also have, including a jetpack that allowed the player to fly around the level, though it was described as quite hard to control. Also seen was an armor to better protect Jim. Finally, he could flatten himself against the floor and do the worm. When IGN played the demo, they asked a number of questions to the developers regarding other content for the game. They were told that each stage of the game has multiple routes and secret areas, and that you could beat them in different ways to find different bonuses. They also reported that each stage would have a different boss and a number of mini-bosses, including the final boss of New Junk City that was entirely made up of rubbish and would turn into a ball and smash everything in sight. The wry sense of humor that the series became known for was also said to be evident, such as at the end of the demo with Jim getting flushed down a gigantic toilet. Originally slated with having an early 2007 release, Atari put the game on hold and by mid-2007 the game seemed to be cancelled. Alissa Bell, an employee from Atari, was contacted by Andrew Yoon from Joystiq and was quoted as saying "I believe EWJ is off the roster. May be revisited in the future, but the title is, as I hear it, on hold." There is a large amount of speculation as to why this game was cancelled, especially after having good feedback from sites who had played the initial demo and a character that has a large cult following, though the main reason that has been reported is financial difficulties. GameZone produced a speculative report as to why the game had been cancelled stating that royalties had a large part to play. "Earthworm Jim was originally published by Interplay, the often money-troubled company that sold off the entire Fallout franchise to Bethesda Softworks to help combat their debt problems. Back in 2006 though, before the sale of the entire Fallout intellectual property, it was reported that they needed $75 million to complete their Fallout MMO project and just by chance, this Earthworm Jim project was set to start around the same time frame. So as luck would have it, Interplay was in dire need of money and had no way of paying off owed royalties from years past to Shiny Entertainment that included the television show, toys and much more that sent the worm into the stratosphere of superstardom." Another theory involves the Shiny Entertainment's shift in management. Around the time that the game was put on hold, Atari sold Shiny Entertainment to Foundation 9. These companies then merged to become Double Helix Games. The last game that was developed and released by Shiny Entertainment was the official game for the film The Golden Compass, released in 2007 on the PS2, PS3,

PSP, Wii, Xbox 360 and the PC and published by Sega. In fact, two sources that worked at Shiny Entertainment at the time have both said that the cancellation was mainly due to Shiny being sold to Foundation 9. One of them said that Foundation 9 wanted all of their resources to work on The Golden Compass and so development on other titles stopped. Even though this game was cancelled, there was hope for an Earthworm Jim 4 being released, with Interplay announcing it in 2008. However, no more was said on this until 2010 when creator Doug TenNapel denied that this was happening. The original creators/developers are still very active in the gaming community to this day. David Perry is the CEO and co-founder of Gaikai. The company has now been acquired by Sony and is working on Playstation Now. Talking about an Earthworm Jim sequel, David Perry was quoted in 2012 saying that "It's one of those things that, no one's got the time right now. I'm sure it's going to happen, I just can't tell you exactly when." Doug TenNapel's latest game is a point-and-click adventure game called Armikrog in partnership with Pencil Test Studios. It is considered a spiritual successor to The Neverhood and uses a clay animation art style. He also works on his comics such as Tommysauraus Rex, Nnewts and others. Nick Bruty is now at Rogue Rocket Games, working on a spiritual sequel to Giants: Citizen Kabuto. Last, but not least, Tommy Tallarico is the co-founder and current host of Video Games Live, a touring orchestral show that performs video game music scores.

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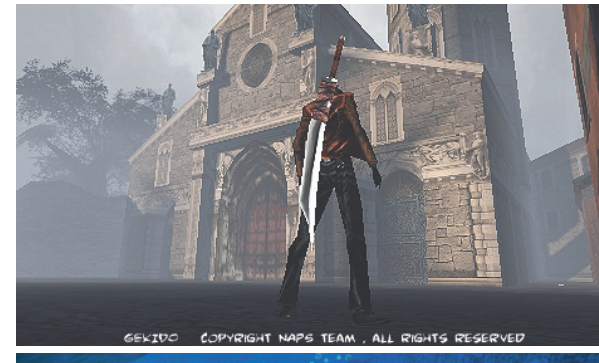
GEKIDO: THE DARK ANGEL

Article by: Silvio Carréra, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The original Gekido: Urban Fighters was developed by the Italian studio NAPS Team and was released in the early 2000s for Playstation. The game played like a classic beat'em up (defeat enemies to progress and fight tougher enemies, rinse and repeat), but with multiple paths to follow while exploring the levels and a 4 players brawl mode. Thanks to its style, interesting characters, a great soundtrack (Fatboy Slim, Apartment 26) and fun gameplay, Gekido gathered a cult following of fans in Europe and USA. New, 2D chapters of the series were planned to be released for Nintendo's Game Boy Color and Nokia's N-Gage but those ended up getting cut. Later on a sequel named Gekido Advance: Kintaro's Revenge was finally released exclusively for the GBA in 2002 (showcasing some of the most beautiful 2D sprites and animations ever seen on Nintendo's portables). The lost Gekido: The Dark Angel for the PSP was supposed to be the third entry of the franchise. It was meant to take things a step further, making the gameplay even more deep and open ended, with free roaming areas to explore, puzzles and a new combat system. When the first images and trailer of Gekido: The Dark Angel were published online, gamers and journalists praised the title for its graphic and style, hoping to play it soon on their PSPs. A few screenshots and some footage surfaced in early 2006 displayed the main character Samuel bearing a striking resemblance to Dante from Capcom's Devil May Cry. The environment and enemies also showed a medieval / gothic style,



much different than what was seen in previous Gekido games. This made people assume that The Dark Angel's gameplay would have been more similar to DMC than Gekido, but NAPS Team told us that this was not the case: the game would have followed and expanded what they did in their earlier games. From the screenshots and footage, we can see that the game would definitely follow a action oriented structure, with its fair share of blood and gore. In one of the images we can also see an underwater section: it would have been interesting to see if and how underwater combat could have played. The Dark Angel initially started as a sequel to the GBA game but then switched to PSP in order to make it even better. The wonders of Gekido PSP did not pass unnoticed by major publishers, and NAPS Team received many proposals to support their new game. Unfortunately, at the time the PSP was not selling enough units to warrant the needed resources to complete such an ambitious project, and they decided to put it on hold, waiting for better times. NAPS Team worked on Gekido PSP for about 2 years (planning a release date for December 2006) before stopping, and they were able to develop an early playable prototype, almost in beta phase. While in the end the PSP was probably not the right console to create a Gekido sequel, NAPS Team still own the IP and continue experimenting with possible sequels every few years (as in october 2014 with the announced, but never released, Gekido for smartphone and tablets). The studio released their latest games on Android and iOS, but as they are a licensed developer for Xbox One and PS4, we can still dream about a new Gekido game for the current consoles.

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LANDSTALKER

Article by: Sam Batten

Landstalker for PSP was set to be a remake of the highly popular action RPG Landstalker: Treasures of King Nole that was originally released on the Megadrive / Genesis in 1992 (Japan) and 1993 (North America and Europe). As with the original game, this PSP remake was in development by Climax Entertainment (also behind such classics as Shining in the Darkness, Shining Force and Dark Savior) and was planned for a Spring 2006 release in Japan. The original Landstalker is highly regarded by people that played it on the Megadrive and is often referred to as the Megadrive's Zelda. It was an adventure of the elf like hero Nigel and his Nymph friend Friday. Landstalker for the PSP was first reported in the September 2005 issue of Famitsu, which included the first details of the game but no screenshots. Only a single teaser artwork was put online on Climax's website. The remake was described to feature 3D visuals with gameplay adjustments to accompany the new possibilities associated with the change from the 2D isometric perspective of the original. There were also to be new scenarios, side stories and a higher difficulty setting. The director and producer for the remake was to be Climax President Kan Naito, who worked on the original game. The game made another appearance at TGS 2005 with the game having a dedicated booth that contained a diorama of part of the Landstalker world along with two PSPs that

showed a tech demo of the 3D environment that had been created, with no gameplay. A new teaser site was put up on Climax Entertainment's website which was reported to have been brought down sometime in 2008. Using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine, it shows that there was a flash image on this page but it does not load properly so all that is shown is a black screen. Brandon Sheffield of Insert Credit reported that he spoke to Kan Naito and the Vice President of Climax Entertainment at TGS 2005. Kan was reported to have said that they had gotten back all the key staff and were making good progress remaking the whole game in 3D. There was not much else reported on the Landstalker remake after TGS 2005 and it seemed to quietly be cancelled with no reasoning from the developers. Even though this remake was silently cancelled, Climax Entertainment still had a working relationship with Sony and released other games on the PSP. These were Tenchi No Mon 1 and 2 (Kingdom of Paradise), and Ore no Dungeon, both of which were RPG games. In July 2008 Climax Entertainment released a game called Steal Princess on the Nintendo DS, which is often likened to Landstalker. This could be a game that they decided to develop instead of the Landstalker remake. Even though Landstalker PSP did not see the light of day, the original has been brought back to the last generation of consoles. Landstalker was released on the Wii Virtual Console on September 2007 (North America) and October 2007 (Europe), then another four years later it was released on Steam in January 2011. Climax Entertainment last released a game in 2012 on the Nintendo 3DS called Runabout 3D: Drive: Impossible, a driving game that was never published outside of Japan. There has not been anything else from this company after this, their website still has a homepage but all of the links are dead. They do not have a twitter feed either and a search on the Internet does not show any news regarding what happened to the studio and if they are still alive.

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MAKAI WARS

Article by: Sam Batten

Makai Wars was a strategy RPG game being developed by Nippon Ichi for the PSP. The game was announced at E3 2004 where a small pamphlet was handed out giving a small amount of information. Makai Wars was to have a very similar art and game play style to Nippon Ichi's other games: Disgaea and La Pucelle. These games were praised by fans for their beautiful art style and their fun engrossing characters, many of which had spin-offs of their own such as Prinny, the popular penguin henchman. Both games are strategy RPG's that have a range of larger than life characters for the player to use. From the similar look and game play of these games it would seem that Makai Wars would be pretty similar, but with a new world, characters and some original features. In Q1 of 2005 though it was announced that the game was to be put on hold so that Nippon Ichi could work on its other titles. IGN confirmed with Nippon Ichi's American representatives that they are a small team and had hoped that they could broaden into the portable market. They also said that there had been many difficulties while developing Makai Wars and the game was not coming on as expected. IGN also spoke to Jack Niida from Nippon Ichi who said that the game is just "placed aside for now" but this rarely bodes well for a game. It was said that they would be concentrating their efforts on the PS2 which included a translation of Atelier and a North American release of Phantom Kingdom, which was to be released as Makai Kingdom. Not much else was said about Makai Wars PSP after it was put on hold. This was until TGS 2005 where Nippon Ichi said that the game would now be being made for the PS3. This could also be supported in an almost whimsical way as Asagi, the girl who was meant to be the main character for Makai Wars, made a cameo appearance in Makai Kingdom which released the same year. In this Cameo Asagi broke the fourth wall and directly told the player that she was going to be the main character in the next Nippon Ichi game. Unfortunately it seems that Makai Wars was not to be on PS3 either: it was once again put on indefinite hold and it has now become a running joke throughout Nippon Ichi's other games. There has been mention of it as a cancelled film which was in development hell, in the PSP version of Disgaea 2, the name has also been used as an item in a few of the Disgaea games. When Asagi made a cameo in Prinny: Can I really be the Hero?

She is mocked by Prinny saying they heard she was going to star in “Makai Wars (Pending)” and that she should change her name to “Asagi (Pending)”. There is also a special ending at the end of Disgaea Infinite (an interesting visual novel on the PSP) where Asagi tries to buy a time machine so she can go back to get the game released. How many development teams have such a level of self-irony to take fun of their own failures? Nippon Ichi are really a crazy and lovable studio. It seems as if Asagi will never get her own game, but in 2011 Haru Akenaga was asked about Makai Wars in a fan powered interview. When asked about the game he said that “The president at the headquarters, Mr. Niikawa, is always planning Makai Wars in his mind and thinking about it. Every time I talk with him, he’s talking about Makai Wars. It’s not time for it though, there’s nothing concrete”. It seems that it will just always be a running joke from the company though as once again in 2013 there was a tease from Nippon Ichi called Makai Wars OOOO: it was not for a game but for a live event starring voice actors called Makai Wars live. Nippon Ichi released Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness in 2005 and Prinny: Can I really be the hero? in 2008 along with many other games for the PSP. They have been consistently releasing games for PlayStation consoles and handhelds for twenty years and "World’s Longest 5 Minutes" for PS Vita was their latest released in summer 2016. Fans of the series will never see Makai Wars for the PSP or the PS3 but it is almost a certainty gamers will see Asagi pop up again in some form or another in future Nippon Ichi games and maybe one day she could be able to change her name to Asagi (Released).

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RESIDENT EVIL PORTABLE

Article by: Sam Batten

Resident Evil Portable was a new survival horror in the Bio Hazard series that was being developed by Capcom for the PSP system. It was officially announced at E3 2009 with just a teaser title and was slated for a 2010 release. According to Capcom’s Twitter feed and Jack Tretton (Sony SCEA CEO), it was being designed specifically for the PSP Go and would be a completely original story in the Resident Evil series. Chris Kamer from Capcom wrote on his blog “I can tell you that Capcom is working very closely with Sony on this title, as it’s something that both companies have wanted on the PSP for quite some time.” Thus begs the question: why didn't this game release when both companies were obviously excited to bring Resident Evil to the system?
The game failed to make a showing the next year at E3 2010 to a lot of people's surprise. It was not on the show floor and was not mentioned in Capcom’s media briefing. An unnamed Capcom employee was asked

about the game and they declined to comment. Instead of showing the PSP version of the game, Capcom showed the new Resident Evil: Revelations for the 3DS instead. There is a lot of speculation around what happened to the PSP game as Capcom made no further announcements. One of the reasons that is posited is the fact it was developed to utilise the PSP Go. The PSP Go was a huge flop, as many consumers did not like that it completely got rid of the physical library (UMD's) and relied on a digital library instead (with high prices for games). The online-only approach was still in its infancy and many consumers were still not ready to make the change. Along with that, the PSP Go was also expensive and did not sell very well at all. Many handheld gamers were instead opting for the PSP 3000. The other big rumour that surrounds this game is that it was scrapped and the ideas were instead put into Resident Evil: Revelations for the 3DS. Revelations came out to rave reviews and was praised for its return to roots in survival horror, rather than the action games that the main Resident Evil series were becoming. Capcom did not release many original games for the PSP after Resident Evil Portable disappeared. Most of the titles that were released were just ports of classic games, including others from the Resident Evil series (namely: Resident Evil Directors Cut, Resident Evil 2, and Resident Evil 3). It appears the only original games that were released by them for the PSP was a game called Sengoku Basura: Battle Heroes and its sequel - games very similar to Dynasty Warriors titles. Of course, these will remain rumours, as there never was an official word of cancellation for Resident Evil Portable. Seeing as the PSP Go has reached the end of its life cycle years ago, it can be assumed that this title will never leave the Capcom mansion alive.

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SAINTS ROW: UNDERCOVER

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Saints Row: Undercover (also known as Saints Row: The Fall in its early phase) is a canceled chapter in the popular over-the-top open world series by Volition, planned to be released for Sony's PSP. This game was meant to be the first entry of Saints Row for portable consoles and while a 3DS version was also announced many years ago (titled Saints Row: Drive-By), neither of them were ever released. Development on Undercover was originally started by Mass Media Games (a company that already worked with Volition on the PS3 version of Saints Row 2) and then transferred to Savage Entertainment (the same team that ported Star Wars: Battlefront II and Medal of Honor: Vanguard to the PSP). Initially Volition wanted to simply port Saints Row 2 to the PSP, but after a while the project became a new, original sequel, with its own story and characters.
Saints Row: The Fall was to be set between Saints Row 1 and 2, but thanks to the success of SR2 they later decided to create a sequel to the second game, to expand its story and making it more interesting for the fans. In Saints Row PSP the city would have been split as a result of a civil war within the Saints. The Third Street Saints, who the player would have joined, possessed only a little area in the middle. We would have took the role of an undercover cop, charged with investigating the civil war within the Saints, and at the end of the game we could have decided to join them and betray the police. The plan for Undercover was to create something similar to the GTA games released for the PSP, keeping the core gameplay of the series, with crazy gameplay, a fun world to explore, character customization and coop multiplayer. The game would have had 20 main story missions to

complete, along with the usual SR side activities to earn respect points. Savage Entertainment developed a short playable prototype, but unfortunately after multiple reviews Volition decided that Undercover just wasn't meeting the standards of what they thought a Saints Row game should be. The game was canceled and the PSP dev kit on which the project was created was hidden away in one of Volition's storage rooms.

Only many years later Saints Row: Undercover was found again thanks to Josh Stinson (Associate Video Editor at Volition), that stumbled upon that PSP dev kit while looking around their office. After talking about it with colleagues and with the support of Alexander Mejia (Video Producer at Volition) and Mike Watson (Community Manager at Volition), they were able to convince their bosses that such a lost games should have been shared with the fans, as an interesting curiosity and a piece of gaming history to preserve. During Volition's stream on Twitch on the 22 January 2016 they officially shown Saints Row: Undercover to the world, with high excitement from fans. Volition freely released online the complete Saints Row: Undercover prototype walk through, the design doc and the fully playable demo: we don't often see companies so open to share files and documents from their lost games, so we love Volition for taking such a bold decision. Huge props to them!

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THE ELDER SCROLLS TRAVELS: OBLIVION

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

The Elder Scrolls Travels: Oblivion is a cancelled action RPG in The Elder Scrolls series that was planned to be released for the PSP, based on the main Oblivion game released for PC, Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2006. The game was in development since 2005 at Climax Group London (formerly known as Syrox Developments, a studio that mostly worked on licensed games for portable consoles) with some help from Climax Group Los Angeles (their business & development studio). The portable version of Oblivion would have boosted new characters, a reworked inventory system, a PSP-designed combat system, original levels and more features exclusive for the PSP. Because of the Playstation Portable hardware limitations, Elder Scrolls Travels: Oblivion was going to be a more linear game than the original Bethesda Game Studios version. There was a hub world which contained various vendors, NPCs and story characters, and player would have used a teleportation crystal to go to each of the explorable areas of the game. The hub world would change and react to the events that went on in each area, for example going on a side mission in a level and rescue an NPC, that NPC may show up in the HUB world as a special vendor or quest giver. Each area had multiple

paths to be explored that were open or closed depending on which quest was active. Oblivion PSP was designed in a way that would maximize the console limitations, but there were a lot of levels planned and at one point Climax even thought it might have to be split onto two UMDs. The team at Climax had access to early builds of Oblivion and played it heavily to be able to better get the feel of the main game. Even Todd Howard was really impressed with the design that the team was able to create for the portable version, which included all of Oblivion's main core mechanics, plot, characters and playable areas related to TES4: Oblivion's storyline. The game took place at the same time as Oblivion, but wanted to express that the Oblivion Crisis was happening all over Tamriel, not just in Cyrodiil, so it was set in and around High Rock. Some of the levels were set in Moonguard, Anticlere, Glenpoint and even Daggerfall, each with their own explorable world areas and plane of Oblivion that was a unique reflection of the level location. In The Elder Scrolls Travels, players would have helped a Mage try to stop the Oblivion Crisis, and each plane of Oblivion featured it's own unique boss.

The designers had planned more than 180 quests, which took on a variety of things from the main quest line to a huge variety of side quests, including quests for the various guilds. The plotline (and side quests) on PSP referenced the Oblivion game and plot line at several points to tie the two products together, and even explained / foretold some of the events of Oblivion – for example, the Dark Brotherhood quest line heavily featured Lucien Lachance (before his demise in the main Oblivion game). The team developed a few playable levels using Renderware Studio and most of the core gameplay systems were already working or planned, as well as the combat mechanics (which allowed the player to sub-select parts of an enemy when targeting them, due to only having one analogue stick on the PSP), inventory system, TES character statistics system using Oblivion's own attributes / skills formula and the conversation system. Although the PSP game was announced for release in spring 2007 and the team had already created some great content, The Elder Scrolls Travels was soon cancelled and it vanished without any official comment from Climax or Bethesda. The original deal was signed with too little time and not enough money to actually make it. In early development Climax was going to use their own internal 3D engine for PSP, but when that didn't move quick enough they switched over to using Renderware Studio (which was already being used on other games) for an easier and faster development. Sadly this was too late to save the project and Oblivion PSP was never completed. Luckily a couple of playable prototypes (June 2006 and January 2007 builds) were leaked online in June 2016, thanks to a Reddit user and an anonymous benefactor at Tamriel Foundry. Gamers can now play these early demos to feel what the final game could have been. In 2007, Climax went through an internal restructure for economic issues and their London studio was closed down. Today the remains of Climax Group are alive under the name Climax Studios, and their latest released game was Assassin's Creed Chronicles for PC, PS4 and Xbox One.

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USHIRO

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Ushiro is a cancelled, turn-based RPG for PSP which was slated to be release in 2009 by Level 5, the creators of many beloved role play titles such as Dragon Quest VIII, Dark Cloud, White Knight Chronicles and Ni no Kuni. Even though a brief trailer of the game was shown during TGS 2008 and hype was already high among fans of the studio, very little is known about this title apart from the main character being a Shinigami (Japanese for "god of death") who was named Reiichiro Ushiro. The other main character was Nanako, a teenage girl. The mischievous spirit's hobby was to grant a last wish to humans, especially those with suicidal tendencies.

Ushiro had the power to possess people, listen into their conversations and eventually fight the evil presence hidden in their souls. In the game, the god of death would have made contact with Nanako during some kind of tragic event and the two characters would have started a new adventure together. The concept sounded interesting, but Level 5 removed Ushiro from its official Japanese website in 2009 and the game was never seen again..

In 2014, after the game was canned, Kadokawa Shoten Publishing announced the release of a light novel based on the game's story called Ushiro: The Displeased Death God and an Ushiro manga started serialization in May 2015. Even though the game was cancelled, Level 5 released a few other games for Sony's PSP: Danball Senki, Jeanne d'Arc and Time Travelers. There are no official reasons why the project was never completed, for sure fans of Level 5 and strange RPGs have lost another interesting title for their collection of portable role play adventures.

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Arcades

Article by: Nicolas Dunai, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Since the early days arcades and the games made for them have had a role in shaping and revolutioning the industry. Titles like Pong (1972), Space Invaders (1978), Asteroids (1979), Battlezone (1980), Pac-Man (1980), Galaga (1981), Donkey Kong (1981) and Defender (1981), are just a few among the most popular worldwide from the beginning of the gaming industry. If you were looking for the best graphics or sound in the 80's and early 90's, you needed to look no further than for an arcade, which would always outperform consoles at the time. We are talking about games like Dragon's Lair (1983), Punch-Out (1984), Outrun (1986), Double Dragon (1987), Golden Axe (1989), Street Fighter II (1992), Mortal Kombat (1992), Soul Edge (1995) and House of Dead (1997) that were not only fun to play, but also great to watch - while waiting for your turn. While companies like Sega would market their consoles as "the arcade experience at home", the early home releases were never able to reach the performance and looks of their arcade counterparts. Popular 3D gaming can be credited to AM2's work in arcades with their Super Scaler games in the 80's, and then their early polygon games in the 90's like Virtua Racing (1992), Virtua Fighter (1993) and Daytona USA (1994). In those ages, arcade games were still a big money maker, especially in Japan and USA. On top of the amazing looks, there was also the social aspect. You meet new people, you fight or race against them, practicing to outskill them or to keep your place as best player in local record rankings, something people would dream of doing at home. The prevalence of lightgun or sit-down-and-play games - mocking what you would do in a real car - were also some that were difficult to replicate at home. You could almost compare this to the difference between watching a movie at home and watching it in a theater. You can always play some of these games at home, but it's never going to be a comparable experience. While the advent of online PC gaming and more powerful home consoles in the late 90's was a great one, it also had a considerable negative consequence for arcades. If people could now recreate at home those social experiences that used to be arcade-exclusive, why even leave the house? And why even spend money at arcades, when home hardware had a graphic similar to the one you could find in arcades, and you didn't have to pay for every game. Outside Japan, arcade revenues would eventually drop, many arcades would shut down or repurpose. However, this wouldn't stop arcade games from being released in the west. A very good example is the chain restaurant Dave and Busters in USA, a mix of arcade and sports themed restaurant. The huge popularity of an arcade where you can eat full meals and watch sports games, would mean the chain could afford to get the newest games from Japan - or American or European - arcade developers. Another point is made by the rise of endless play arcades. These arcades have you pay a set amount to play all the games provided, as much as you want, usually classic games. Many arcades also provide other activities besides the cabinets themselves, such as lasertag, go-karts, and minigolf. Something similar happened in Japan, but, in there arcades better survived to the invasion of powerful home consoles, probably because of a more varied and original experience. Thanks to some of the most popular gaming companies like Nintendo, Sega, Namco and Taito, Japan soon became a leader in creating successful games for arcades. Known as "Game Centers", these places offer a wide variety of cabinets with complex controls and screens that cannot be replicated on home consoles (Gundam POD, Afterburner R360), realistic fishing simulators, extreme racing games (Inital D Arcade Stage, Wangan Midnight), hyper-fast rhythm games of all sorts (Dance Dance Revolution, Beatmania, Drummania, Pop'n Music, Taiko no Tatsujin, Maimai, Chunithm, Groove Coaster, CrossBeats), bullet-hell shooters with impossible patterns (DoDonPachi, Guwange, Espgaluda, Mushihimesama, Deathsmiles), old-school 2D and 3D fighting games (Street Fighter, Tekken, Persona 4: Arena, Virtua Fighter, AquaPazza, BlazBlue, Guilty Gear), multiplayer arena brawler (Gundam Extreme Versus, Border Break, Gunslinger Stratos 2, Dissidia Final Fantasy, Dragon Ball Zenkai Battle, Steel Chronicle), MOBA-alike real time strategy (Lord of Vermilion, Wonderland Wars), pachinko machines to simulate gambling without winning any real money, purikura (print booths where to take photos of you and your friends, modify them and then print stickers), crane games to win plushes and gadgets, virtual horse betting games (Star Horse) and many, many more (Pulirula, The First Funky Fighter, The BishiBashi, Cho Chabudai Gaeshi, Tsukkomi Yousei Gips, Fighting Mania). The variety and sheer number of arcade games Japan has, had, and will have, greatly outnumbers output in the west. Developers and Publishers whose output in the west, especially on consoles is lacking, are making numerous games for Japanese arcades. Unfortunately, many of these old and recent titles either never reach the west or never get ported to a home console or PC, making them exclusive features of Japanese game centers. In the last few years arcades are declining even in Japan, with a market valued $6.77 billion in 2007 that fell to $4.89 billion in 2010, but this follows a general declining of the entertainment industry in the country, with home consoles, manga and anime getting similar results. In relation to the prototype and unreleased games scene, arcade games are peculiar. While there are many cancelled arcade games, this doesn't mean they were unfinished or never

played. Many of these games have seen the light through location tests, where gaming studios offer players to try their new cabinets and ask for their feedback. Games like this include Yu Suzuki's Psy-Phi, Westone's Tokei Jikake no Aquario and Capcom's Fighting All-Stars. Cancelling games at this point in release, can happen for a variety of reasons ranging from financial issues, safety concerns, or just plain poor reception. The arcade gaming community, is small yet extremely active in historical preservation, making great efforts to locate and maintain canned arcade boards, documenting those lost games and often uploading them online to be preserved and played through emulators like Mame. There are probably better places online where you can learn about the unseen history of arcade video games, still we meant writing about a few of our favorite examples in this book, to acknowledge their importance.

ARCADES
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CAPCOM FIGHTING ALL-STARS

Article by: Sebastian Zavala, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Capcom Fighting All-Stars was a 3D fighting game in development by Capcom, planned for arcades and the PlayStation 2. It was designed to translate the popular 2D fighting game series into 3D, something that was done previously in the Street Fighter EX series by Arika, but not directly by Capcom. Not only would the game have used polygonal models of classic Street Fighter characters, it would also have had playable characters from other Capcom series, such as Final Fight and Rival Schools. Confirmed characters were fan favorites Ryu, Chun-Li, Alex, Charlie Nash, Mike Haggar, Poison, Batsu, Akira and Strider Hiryu, along with newcomers DD (the "God of Thunder"), Rook (the "Fallen Angel"), Ingrid (the "Eternal Goddess"), and Death. These new characters would have been linked to the game's plot, with Death threatening to detonate a bomb in Metro City (the urban setting used in the Final Fight and Captain Commando series) and Mike Haggar asking for help from the most powerful fighters of the world to stop the enemy and defuse the bomb. It seems that some secret codes were needed to disarm the bomb and only DD, Rook and Ingrid knew them. Gameplay-wise, Capcom Fighting All-Stars used a 3-tier life system, in which each character would gain a level in a Super Combo Gauge for each lost life. There would have been Super Arts capable of up to 3 power levels and a sidestepping move to evade hits from the adversary. Some kind of "finishing moves" were also available, similar to "Fatalities" in Mortal Kombat. Capcom organized a few test locations to let gamers play Fighting All-Stars and received feedback: it seems that hardcore players did not like the game at all and Capcom decided to cancel it in August 2003. While Fighting All-Stars was canned, the idea of using multiple characters from different Capcom series in a crossover game would instead be used in a 2D fighting game, Capcom Fighting Evolution (also known as Capcom Fighting Jam), released in 2004 for Arcades, PS2 and Xbox. Ingrid, one the original characters from All-Stars, would appear in Evolution and later on in the PSP port of Street Fighter Alpha 3. Even if All-Stars' gameplay was not up to par to some gamers' expectations, Capcom did not abandon a few of the concepts and characters created for the game. We still hope that one day a playable version of the All-Stars beta shown at test locations could leak online, so people from all around the world would finally be able to find out for themself if they would have liked it or not.

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CLOCKWORK AQUARIO

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Originally called "Ghost Hunter", Clockwork Aquario was a three-player arcade game created by Westone Bit Entertainment, the Japanese developer primarily known for the Wonderboy series. The project would be cancelled in 1994, after roughly two years of development. According to music composer Shinichi Sakamoto in an interview by Amusement Center, Clockword Aquario was supposed to be a cooperative, auto-scrolling platformer like Wonder Boy 3: Monster Lair. However, unlike the latter which was more of a shooter, in Aquario enemies had to be stunned by jumping on their heads, before being grabbed and thrown against a wall or off-screen. Players could also knock foes unconscious by launching another enemy at them, or even head-butt a stunned adversary thrown by other players. This game featured three selectable characters: Hack Rondo, Ellie Moon and a robot named Gash. Interestingly, the game was originally planned to be two-players only, just like Wonder Boy 3. In the same interview with Amusement-Center, Shinichi Sakamoto furthermore revealed the meaning of the game's title: "Well, originally I think there was going to be a clockwork motor that also served as our time limit system..". Thanks to the website of a Japanese player that played the game in a few location testings, we know many more important details about Aquario's different pre-release builds. For example, the first version of the game that he played had an invincibility button that made players invulnerable for a short period of time, which could also be extended by picking up items. Like Ghosts 'n Goblins, after being hit once, characters would lose parts of their clothes and if they didn't restore their life with an health power-up, the second hit was fatal. Each stage had a mini-boss that, if defeated, released a key for the main boss lair. Just like normal enemies, bosses could be conquered by jumping on their head or throwing other baddies at them. It seems that this early build (dated June 1993) was really hard: The Japanese player couldn't beat the first boss (a crab), the invincibility button was hard to use, enemies moved too quickly and even the first stage had some very unfair traps. As a result, it seems that Westone made the game considerably easier for the next location test, held on 21 August 1993. First of all, it was now possible to defeat enemies simply by punching them enough times, without the need to throw them out of the screen; the invincibility button was replaced with an simple invulnerability item similar to the star of the Mario games; and lastly, players could get an extra life just by filling a 1-Up gauge. According to the same Japanese player, this build looked almost complete. Another location test was held on 29 August 1993, and aside from some minor differences, it seems that this version featured a brand new 2-player competitive mode. Apparently, Westone did a last public test of the game in the Spring of 1994, but unfortunately we do not have any further information about this event. Ultimately, Clockwork Aquario was cancelled due to the negative reception from players which tested it. Moreover, the videogame market was rapidly shifting towards home consoles and thus it would have been economically risky to launch an arcade game. After a long decline, Westone Bit Entertainment went bankrupt in 2014, but before

this time, it seemed that the source code of Acquario still existed in Westone's archives. However, the game's soundtrack is available to buy on the Amusement-Center website.

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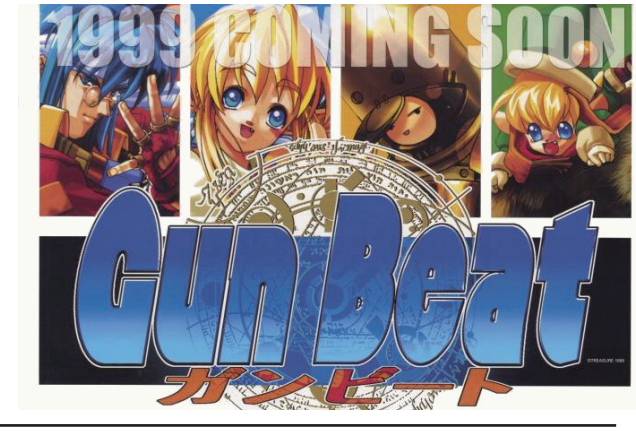
GUN BEAT

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)



Gun Beat is a cancelled arcade racer that was being developed in 1999 by Treasure, the legendary team behind masterpieces such as Radiant Silvergun and Gunstar Heroes. It was planned for release on NAOMI board arcade machines along with a rumoured Dreamcast port. First shown in video form at AOU Expo 1999, the game was an interesting cross between a racing game and a shooter. Players scored points not just for completing a lap in the shortest possible time or finishing the race in top position in one of the three tracks available (City, Snow Mountain, Ancient Ruins), but also by damaging enemies and earning a bonus for longer chains of successful hits. At the end of every track there was a boss to beat, and by defeating it you could get different kinds of items to use in the next race based upon your score. Gun Beat featured four playable characters: Scud-man, a robot, Mirabelle, an elf on a broom, Carmine, who used a motorbike, and Cunyanya, a little girl riding a giant hamster. Each of them could jump, use a magical turbo bar to go faster, or perform a powerful special attack called "Gun beat" by moving the joystick upwards twice. Treasure's racer-shooter featured three game modes: "Race Mode", "Time Attack Mode" and "Battle Mode", the latter of which supported up to four arcade machines linked together. In September of 1999, Gamespot quizzed Treasure president Masato Maegawa about the title: he did not directly specify that the project was shelved but the journalist speculated that Gun Beat was most likely cancelled due to the lead producer departing the company some months before. On May 23, 1999, IGN reported that Gun Beat had been put on hold indefinitely. They also wrote that development could resume if "conditions would have been satisfied". In the early 2000s, Treasure cancelled a PS2 multiplayer

brawler called Tiny Toon Adventures: Defenders of the Universe, of which a complete build leaked on the internet in 2009, and even if the project was eventually dropped, a new vertical shooter was planned for Xbox 360. Treasure launched Sin and Punishment 2 for Wii in 2009, but the game was a commercial flop. In 2014, Maegawa hinted about a new original PC title from Treasure, but as of mid 2016 the Japanese software house has only released a porting of Ikaruga on Steam.

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PSY-PHI

Article by: Heidi Kemps

Psy-Phi was a one-VS-one touchscreen fighting game for arcades created by Yu Suzuki and developed by Sega AM Plus, announced alongside Virtua Fighter 5 in 2005. Players would take control of one of several psychic fighters in 3D aerial one-on-one battles in open arenas. Suzuki himself likened it to "futuristic dodge ball." Players controlled outlandish-looking psychic warriors by touching arrows located on the four corners of the screen. Onscreen touch controls would initiate attacks and defensive maneuvers. A special attack could be performed at times by picking a symbol and drawing it on screen with your finger. The touchscreen was used so "control is more directly connected with your thoughts and physical actions." The game concept came about from Yu Suzuki's interest in manga and anime with psychic themes, particularly Mitsuteru Yokoyama's Babel II. Psy-Phi was far enough along development to be location tested at Japanese arcades and trade shows, but unfortunately it would never be completed. Sega was releasing several high-profile arcade games at the same time, and, despite Yu Suzuki's pedigree being attached to the game, there didn't seem to be a lot of buzz around Psy-Phi. The visuals looked rather simple in comparison to other Lindbergh hardware titles (the game was initially being developed on the Xbox-based Chihiro), and the combat seemed rather simplistic. Hands-on reports on outlets like 2ch from players who played trade show and location test versions seemed to find the game rather uninteresting. Another possible reason for its cancellation, given by several Japanese sources and a Polygon interview with Yu Suzuki, was fear of legal problems. The touch-screens for the game would get quite warm, and there was concern that rapid movements and friction would give players burns, and thus leave Sega open to being sued. Sega's recent touch-screen MaiMai rhythm game strongly encourages players to use gloves when playing for this reason. After the cancellation of Psy-Phi, Sega AM Plus worked on an arcade racing game called Sega Race TV before closing down and relocating its staff to other Sega AM divisions. Yu Suzuki left Sega in 2009 to establish YS-net

(his own development studio) and to work on Shenmue City for Yahoo Games. Today Suzuki is busy working on the most wanted third chapter of ShenMue, planned for PS4 and PC.

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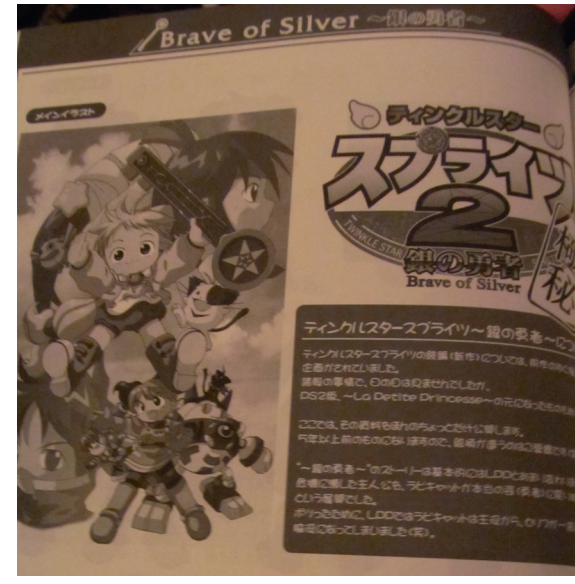
TWINKLE STAR SPRITES 2

Article by: Heidi Kemps



Twinkle Star Sprites 2: Brave of Silver is a cancelled competitive scrolling shooter developed by ADK (Alpha Denshi). It was first revealed in a 2006 doujinshi released at Comic Market by character designer Mimori Fujinomiya. The doujinshi, titled "Twinkle Star Sprites: La Petite Princesse Materials Collection," consisted primarily of art and designs for the PS2 game of the same name. However, at the end of the book, Fujinomiya revealed several designs intended for a game called Twinkle Star Sprites 2: Brave of Silver. The plot for this game was described in the doujinshi as being "essentially the same as La Petite Princesse," with one key difference: the end goal would be to help the game's Rabicat return to human form. Characters revealed in the various illustrations include the titular "Brave of Silver" (a young boy with a big sword and the humanoid form of Rabicat), a very different-looking Time with a large, long ponytail and a cat-ear hood, and a robot girl named Lunna Titanium. Some characters shown, such as Do-Edge, Realy Reise, and Mikoto, are very similar in appearance to their previous PS2 iterations. Other concept illustrations feature a clockwork owl familiar much like Freesia's companion in La Petite Princesse. Not much was revealed about gameplay, but it's safe to assume that it would play similarly to the original Twinkle Star Sprites: a split-screen competitive shooter with cute visuals. It's likely that Twinkle Star Sprites 2 was still in very early development when it was canned, as no actual screenshots are pictured in the doujinshi. Only character designs and promotional illustrations were revealed. We can speculate that the game was canceled due to the financial issues of ADK (and later SNK) towards the end of the 90s. They lacked the cash flow to produce practically anything, which lead to their absorption into SNK Playmore. Fujinomiya late moved on to design characters for the company's Doki Doki Majo Shinpan, an adventure series for Nintendo DS.

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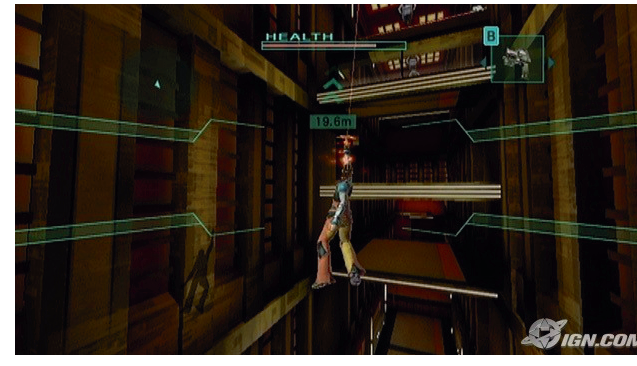
Nintendo Wii

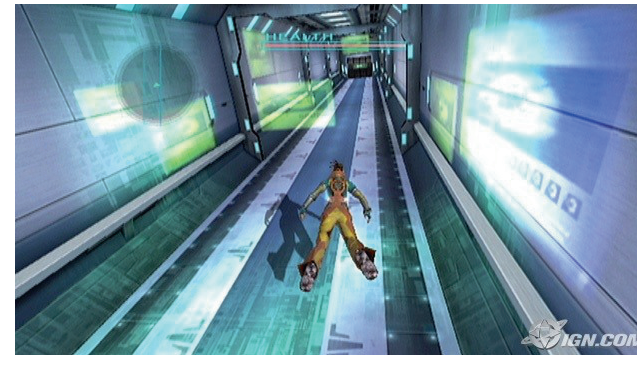
Article by: Jade Avis

The Wii was the fifth console developed by Nintendo, released on November 2006 with an original feature: players could use the Wii Remote as a motion controller, to play games with physical gestures. The GameCube was a “stereotypical” console compared to the Wii, with hardware very similar to the PS2 and Xbox, making it harder for Nintendo to stand out in a crowded market. Something different was needed to succeed against such powerful competitors. When the “experimental” Nintendo DS won against the more traditional PSP, Nintendo understood that the "alternative road" was the right one and their "Revolution" (as the Wii was known before its official presentation) could have a similar success in the home market. They likely did not expect such huge success, but Nintendo were able to create something different to reach a new audience. While many “hardcore” games were released on the Wii such as Monster Hunter Tri (2009), Sin & Punishment 2 (2009), Xenoblade (2010), Mad World (2009), Muramasa (2009) and fan favorite Nintendo franchises such as Mario Galaxy (2007), Metroid Prime 3 (2007), Mario Kart Wii (2008), Super Smash Bros. Brawl (2008) and Zelda: Skyward Sword (2011), the console was especially appreciated by the casual audience thanks to titles such as Wii Sports (2006) and Wii Fit (2007). Because of this, many third party game companies such as SEGA and Namco and Capcom also created casual games for the console. However, many of these games sold poorly and were given negative reviews as most casual gamers were happy enough playing Wii Sports again and again to buy something else, creating a difficult situation in which even with a huge market to sell games to many studios were not able to gain profit from Wii games. The original Wii console was discontinued on October 2013, but the Wii Mini (2012) – a smaller and cheaper version of the hardware – is still being sold. In total the Wii has shipped more than 101 million units worldwide. As of December 2015, there have been more than 1700 games published for the Nintendo Wii and only one hundred of them sold over a million copies. When developers found out that the Wii was not a profitable platform to easily sell their games many projects were cancelled or released with changes and downgraded features. In the next few pages we’ll analyze some of the most interesting lost games once planned for the Wii.

COSMIC WALKER

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)





Cosmic Walker is one of the most obscure cancelled games that was in development for the Wii. At Nintendo Fall Conference 2008 they displayed a video reel full of upcoming Wii games planned for the system, like Punch Out Wii, Sin & Punishment 2 and Another Code R. Along with these released titles, shown for the first time there was a short video for Cosmic Walker, a curious space simulation game that would have been published by Nintendo and developed by Gaia, the studio created by former Atlus co-founder Kouji Okada. Apart from those few seconds of footage, no information was published about what this game was about. After its initial reveal in 2008, Cosmic Walker was only shown as a "coming soon" title in to-be-released lists for the Wii, but from January 2010 onward even the title disappeared from every list of upcoming Nintendo games, and in October 2010 Gaia's official website ceased activity, and the studio seems to have been closed. Cosmic Walker was never officially cancelled, but with the vanishing of Gaia it was clear that Nintendo would have not released the game. Even with nothing to really know how Cosmic Walker would have been played, fans and gaming websites tried to speculate what it could have been about. IGN published a story in 2009 with a detailed analysis of the few images and footage, concluding that the game would have been an exploring simulation game similar to the Endless Ocean series (in which players were able to freely explore the ocean, photographing fishes and finding hidden underwater places), without any combat: "The Astronaut shown in the screenshots and video has a health and air meter and carries what appears to be a gun-shaped tool which is assumed to be for doing repairs. The character also makes use of a grappling hook device and is seen doing space walks outside his space vehicle/station. Since the images and videos shown feature no enemies or other characters, it appears that there was to be no combat in the game and gameplay would mainly feature exploration and repair work." The quiet cancellation of Cosmic Walker is even sadder when thinking about past games that Kouji Okada was involved with, as the Shin Megami Tensei series, Folklore, Maken Shao, Maken X and the first two Persona episodes. If Cosmic Walker would have had the same kind of characters and story of other games in Okada's resume, plot-wise we could have had one of the most intricate and weird space-adventure games ever conceived. Unfortunately Gaia closed down with only a few released games: Monster Kingdom: Jewel Summoner (PSP, 2006), Coded Soul (PSP, 2008) and Sword & Poker (iOS, 2010). It's currently unknown whatever happened to Kouji Okada and if he's still working in the videogame industry.

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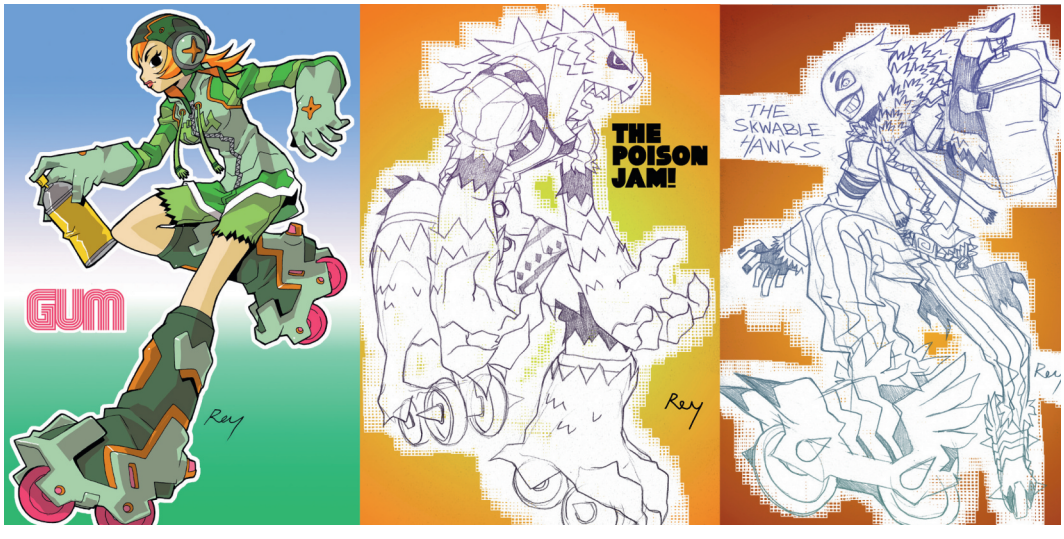
JET SET RADIO

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

In 2006, Kuju Entertainment, with the help of concept artist Corey S. "Rey" Lewis, created a pitch for a new Jet Set Radio game, that would have been developed for the Nintendo Wii, and tried to propose the project to SEGA. Unfortunately it seems that SEGA was not interested in Kuju's concept and so the game was never made. The Japanese company said they were not interested in making a new Jet Set Radio for any console, leaving Jet Set Radio Future as the current version of the series. Only a few pieces of concept art remain from the JSR Wii pitch. Lewis posted some of them on March of 2008, although he listed the artwork for characters Beat, Gum, Tab and Professor K as dating back to 2006. He also wrote "Unfortunately, the JGR pitch didn't take", but there was never an official announcement on the project's cancellation, or any information on whether development was carried on. The aforementioned Kuju Entertainment actually comprised a number of studios, including Zoe Mode, Kuju America, and DoubleSix, among others. Kuju London, which specialised in Wii development, eventually changed its name to Headstrong Games, revealing that it had an unannounced Sega title in the works (the studio's previous titles include the Battalion Wars series for Nintendo). After this proposed Jet Set Radio title was cancelled, the team developed the excellent House of the Dead: Overkill for the Wii, Silent Hill: Downpour for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. Their latest game, developed as Headstrong Games, is Disney Art Academy for the Nintendo 3DS. Jet Set Radio was lastly featured in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed, where Beat and Gum are playable characters. While Sega is not interested in making a new game in the series, indie studio Fusty Game is currently working on a similar game to JSR, with their project "Hover: Revolt Of Gamers". Other fans of the series created www.jetsetradio.live, a streaming radio inspired by JSR and are currently working on Project Beat, a remake of Jet Set Radio Future for PC.



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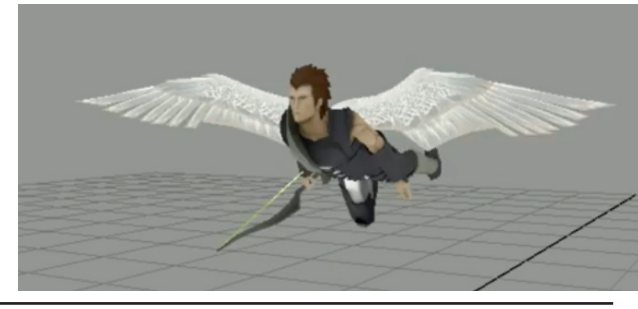
KID ICARUS

Article by: James Alan Griffiths

Icarus is a character from ancient Greek mythology. His father was master the craftsman Daedalus, who created a pair of fully functional wings to escape from Crete, fashioned out of wax and old feathers. Icarus took to flight very well and was seemingly unstoppable as he performed stunt plane - style maneuvers (probably) and revelled in his ability. Like every decent dad, Daedalus warned his over-confident offspring to be careful where he was flying. Plot a steady course that was halfway between sea and sky. However, Icarus' excitement caused him to fly too close to that big ol' ball of burning gas we call the sun, and the wax holding the wings together melted, causing - quite literally - a fall from grace for Icarus, who fell into the ocean below and subsequently drowned. The character of Pit, from Nintendo's long running but neglected Kid Icarus series, bears little in common with his mythical game-namesake, apart from his image of a young protagonist with wings, but the tale has very obvious similarities with the real-life tale of how Factor 5, onetime Nintendo bestie, would almost create a title in that series. If the developer were Icarus himself, then Nintendo was the sensible father Daedalus, hovering in the peripheries calmly telling their son to just calm down and fly straight. Kid Icarus Wii's first etching into public consciousness was the news broken by Internet gaming giant IGN. They reported that a brand new game in the series would be announced at the 2008 E3, developed by none other than former Nintendo buddies, and developer of a series of highly-lauded licensed Star Wars titles, German studio Factor 5. Reviving one of Nintendo's long dormant game series, Pit skipped three generations of Nintendo consoles, his last outing being all the way back on the Game Boy, seventeen years previously, in Kid Icarus: Of Myths and Monsters. Nintendo seemingly found it hard to evolve the series beyond the 2D platforming and shooting that was prevalent on the two games that had at that point been released. After a degree of success with their Rogue Squadron series on the N64 and GameCube, partnering with Nintendo to bring the games with exclusivity to those platforms, Factor 5 would go on to moonlight with both Microsoft and Sony, creating system exclusive Lair for the latter. Their pitch for a long awaited Kid Icarus sequel would end up becoming one of their last forays into gaming. Because of the advancement in home console technology since the last Kid Icarus game, Factor 5 were presented with a blank canvas and had a pretty free reign over how they were going to present a more modern Pit to Nintendo gamers. Concept art was drawn up, and a prototype was created that utilised Factor 5's in house engine. The game was purportedly an open world game where traversal either on foot or using Pit's power of flight could be utilised at any point during gameplay. In the original 2D iterations, Pit could only hover for a brief moment, but the intended sandbox would afford players the ability to take to land or sky at any point, seamlessly collecting a series of then-unspecified items. As expected from a game this early in development, plans drawn remained in a constant state of flux, but the ideas the developers presented all conformed to a theme darker than those in the previous games. As development progressed on paper, the team referred to the project simply as Icarus - the 'Kid' prefix discarded in an effort to denote the passing of time between the previous games. Various character art represented an older, sometimes gnarled Pit, battle scarred and looking for a fight, like he had seen some



pretty bad stuff. Perhaps he was troubled like a sort of European Anakin Skywalker. Story scenarios depicted Pit as a sort of fallen angel, cast out by his leader Palutena. Interestingly, some of this art showed Pit brandishing what would later become his trademark weapon, two curved swords that, when joined in the middle, become a bow from which to fire arrows. Whether this addition was created in house by Factor 5, or suggested by Nintendo is unclear. According to reports from various sources within Factor 5, Nintendo was initially keen to allow free thinking towards what a modern Kid Icarus title could be, and these ideas were clearly radical and perhaps different to how the platform holder intended for the franchise. A lot of resources were evidently placed in the project, Factor 5 working hard to create something that would meet Nintendo's approval. The darker image for the game included the same enemies as the previous 8-bit games, but with a similarly darker style. Around this time, Pit would make his debut in Nintendo's fighting series Super Smash Bros, in the series' third entry, Brawl, also on Wii. The character model used in this game was more akin to the way he features in the NES and Game Boy games, very clearly still a kid. Looking at the work Factor 5 was doing with Kid Icarus, Nintendo clearly wasn't happy and sent Factor 5 the Brawl model, in an attempt to get them to use this rather than the adult Pit. Although they toyed with the idea of using the younger version of the character alongside his future self, the development team behind Icarus ultimately decided not to pursue this idea, their intention being to continue with the original vision for a more mature, gritty title. Sadly, this is where the project started to unravel. What Factor 5 saw more as friendly suggestion could have been more of a friendly demand on Nintendo's part, the platform holders reportedly being disappointed that Factor 5 declined to utilise the assets they provided. With the relationship between the two companies probably soured and Kid Icarus' Wii outing grounded, Factor 5 would sadly close their doors in May 2009, their final project being a cancelled Superman game that would never come to fruition. Pit would of course take flight again in the 3DS title Kid Icarus: Uprising, created a lot closer to home by Smash Bros series director Masahiro Sakurai, which was true to Pit's Smash Bros revival, and conformed to a Saturday morning anime feel that Nintendo were clearly more comfortable with. Had Icarus been approved by Nintendo, it's easy to speculate that Factor 5 may have been trusted with other Nintendo franchises and may have become a western second party developer of a similar ilk to Retro Studios. But because of artistic integrity and over ambition, they would metaphorically be destined to burn and free fall into the sea, following a flight path that was clearly too close to the sun. Father, of course, knows best.

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KNIGHT WARS

Article by: Conor Hutton

Ever want to ride around in a Wii game completing tasks in a Medieval England for none other than King Arthur? If your answer is yes then you would have been very happy in 2006 or 2007 when Kuju London (Battalion Wars and Battalion Wars 2) was working on one such game. However, you'll be disappointed to hear it was subsequently cancelled. The game would have been a medieval real time strategy spinoff of the Battalion Wars series in which the player would have controlled tens of thousands of troops. The gameplay probably would have been similar to that of Battalion Wars, which contained elements of both third-person action and real time strategy, and also allowed the player to switch between any unit at any time. The troop types would have ranged from simple cavalry men to magicians. Neil Petty, a concept artist who worked on the game, has put some of his concept artwork for Knight Wars up on his website. The artwork mainly concentrates on Viking settlements which indicates that Vikings may have been an enemy type or playable faction in the game. That's pretty much all we know about Knight Wars, as it was cancelled in 2007, probably because Nintendo decided to shift its focus and resources from the real time strategy game to more casual and accessible games like Wii Fit. Another possible reason for Knight Wars' cancellation is that Nintendo might have wanted Kuju to concentrate on Battalion Wars 2, because an already established IP is more likely to sell than a new one.

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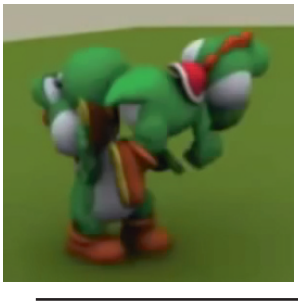
MARIO SPIKERS

Article by: Liam Robertson (Tamaki)

Super Mario Spikers is a cancelled volleyball / wrestling hybrid game, which was being developed by Next Level Games; makers of the Gamecube title, Super Mario Strikers, and its follow-up, Mario Strikers: Charged. It was planned to be developed for the Nintendo Wii, but never made it far past the initial phases of conceptualisation. In 2007, Mario Strikers: Charged was released on the Nintendo Wii and was met with both positive reception and commercial success. Pleased with Next Level's work, Nintendo allowed the developer a larger budget to tackle its next project; as well as a greater level of creative freedom with their characters. A former artist at Next Level Games spoke to us about the project: "It was a wrestling/volleyball hybrid with a game show slant. It was never released and was financed as more of a reward to Next Level for doing such a great job on MSC". The core development team at NLG didn't begin fully working on Spikers until 2007, but the company's artists had already been drafting new ideas for future Mario sports games throughout 2006, alongside work on Charged. Concept artists worked intermittently on the project until Strikers: Charged was nearing completion. It was around the end of 2006 that Next Level's heads settled on their new direction from early renders created in September. Towards the very start of this project, the developer went back and forth on various names for the game. Its initially proposed title was simply 'Mario Volleyball'; we assume to associate it with Nintendo's other Mario sports titles

MARIO WRESTLING UNIFORM CONCEPT

at the time, such as Mario Golf and Tennis. Although the game would eventually evolve into a hybrid of wrestling and volleyball, in the beginning, it started off solely as a relatively simplistic volleyball title with Mario characters. It was when more employees began to transition into Mario Volleyball that its mechanics and ideas became more fleshed out and the decision was made to add the twist of wrestling, among other things. Once the project had begun to shift further and further from the realms of standard volleyball, the team opted to rename it 'Super Mario Spikers'; a clear reference to their previous Mario sports productions. The significance of Next Level Games adding wrestling to one of their games like this will not be lost on those thoroughly versed in their back catalogue. Between 2004 and 2005, they were developing a WWE game with sci-fi and fantasy elements called 'WWE Titans: Parts Unknown'. An anonymous contributor close to the Spikers project described this game's influence on it: "Between the contact sport part of Strikers and some of the work that was done a couple of years before on an unreleased wrestling game, it came as a pretty natural progression". The wrestling mechanics drew upon NLG's experiences with the title, which was a more stylised, cartoonish version of WWE to begin with. We have been fortunate enough to recover some of the animations made for the wrestling moves in Mario Spikers, discovered in a reel put together by a former Next Level animator. As we can see in the short footage, the combat system incorporated special moves made up of established wrestling maneuvers. For instance, in one clip, we can see a Yoshi performing a pile-driver attack. In another, Waluigi stomps on Mario's stomach, who is grounded, laying on his back. Unlike the Strikers games, which played out almost exclusively in a selection of large football stadiums set around the Mario universe, Mario Spikers had a slightly more varied collection of environments proposed for it. In one of the level concepts, we can see a huge wrestling arena, the setting of a match between Mario and Wario. The massive crowds are populated by smaller Mario characters, including birdos, shy guys and the piantas from Super Mario Sunshine. On the other side of the spectrum, some of the stages put forward took place in comparatively smaller areas and took inspiration from TV game show sets. Each one of these was planned to sport its own unique environmental gimmicks, such a carnival wheel which would introduce random effects into play based upon where it landed. Ultimately, Super Mario Spikers was never greenlit by publisher, Nintendo. The project was pitched to the company's higher ups, but was declined because it was felt that certain aspects of its premise clashed with the company's code of honour. Work on Spikers ceased altogether in 2007 and Next Level Games instead went on to develop other Nintendo projects, including Punch-Out!! and a Metroid 3DS prototype. It is possible that a very



early, playable prototype of the game was created for Next Level's pitch, although any images of one have yet to be found.

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PROJECT HAMMER

Article by: Sebastian Zavala

Project H.A.M.M.E.R. was an action-adventure beat 'em up game for the Wii, which was being developed by Nintendo Software Technology Corp. The team's other projects included Metroid Prime Hunters for the Nintendo DS, 1080° Avalanche and Wave Race: Blue Storm for the Nintendo GameCube. The game was supposed to cater to more "serious" gamers for the Wii, making use of a gritty tone and focusing on destructive action. Project H.A.M.M.E.R.'s story was uncharacteristically dark for a Nintendo game and a lot of time and resources were put into it. The game's protagonist, cyborg M09, was the creation of a secret government program named "Project Hammer". Set in the near future, the United States was being invaded by killer robots, and the military was struggling to contain them. M09 and his mentor, Natasha Mintz, are called upon to save the country. Equipped with a giant, powerful hammer, the cyborg hero is tasked to face off with a group of villains who are cyborgs very similar to him, and to discover their secret plot against the USA's government. Even though the story wasn't the main focus of the game (similarly to other Nintendo titles), it had been fully developed, and Nintendo even hired Silver Ant, a third-party animation company, to produce the cut-scenes. In the end, only the introduction was completed, because of the failure of the project. Nevertheless, Silver Ant was again hired by Nintendo to produce the intro cutscene for the Wii's Mario Strikers Charged. Gameplay wise, Project HAMMER was quite simple. It was to be a beat 'em up, in which the player controlled M09 smashing his way through waves of enemy robots, with each level ending in a boss fight. Players could lock-on to enemies using the pointer; they could swing the Wii Remote to use the character's hammer or flick it to use a spin attack; they could point it upwards and thrust it to impact the ground; standard attacks were performed by tapping the "A" button, and a charge attack could be done with the "Z" button. M09's attack and defence were to increase as one progressed through the game; Project H.A.M.M.E.R. had a very basic leveling-up system. The game was first revealed at E3 2006, but later vanished from future showings and faded into obscurity. Nevertheless, the initial concept of the game was quite different to what was revealed in that event. NST was, in the beginning, trying to make a "Westernized" version of a Dynasty Warriors game, their own take of the formula. They wanted to produce a title in which players battled through giant waves of enemies, which the

occasional fight against a similarly-matched warrior to the protagonist. Even though most Nintendo titles are created with gameplay first in mind, Project H.A.M.M.E.R.'s (and NST's) first mistake was to create the tone, characters and world-building first. Rumours began circulating in mid-June 2007 that the game had been cancelled, and that the team had began developing other titles. Nintendo confirmed at E3 2007 that development had been put on hold. Beth Llewelyn, senior director of public relations at Nintendo of America, stated that, despite the game not being a priority to Nintendo at the moment, it was still possible for it to come back in the future. In 2009, though, a report was revealed stating that Project H.A.M.M.E.R was officially cancelled due to creative internal conflicts at Nintendo Software Technology. Apparently, despite the fact that the game was quite far along, it simply wasn't fun. Hence, both the development team and studio management agreed that something needed to be done. Unfortunately, the two groups just didn't get along and disagreed on many topics; the development team wanted to make the core mechanics more entertaining, while the management wanted to completely change the game's environments (emphasising their destructibility). The two groups continued having disagreements while the game's development moved ahead. These troubles caused many team members to simply leave the project; the head designer was fired (and blamed by the management for the project's failure), and the managers actually ordered a visual overhaul of the game. The developers, naturally, tried to comply, but management was never satisfied. This dissatisfaction, lack of communication, and lack of a clear vision of the title (at one point, management even considered releasing a casual version of Project H.A.M.M.E.R to be called Wii Crush, which emphasised the motion control-based hammer controls and nothing else) caused the game to simply disappear. Nintendo spent an excess of $1 million on the project (quite the waste), resources were shifted to other projects, and nowadays, Nintendo Software Technologies is relegated to making small digital games (their most recent title was Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Tipping Stars and they even assisted in the creation of the Google-powered app Wii Street U), instead of important contributions to Nintendo's software lineup.

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RED FACTION: B.E.A.S.T.

Article by: Conor Hutton

Red Faction: B.E.A.S.T was a third person action game in development exclusively for the Nintendo Wii. It was a spin-off of Red Faction and would have been the fourth game in the series, but that place was taken by 2011's unsuccessful Red Faction: Armageddon. B.E.A.S.T was cancelled when its publisher THQ was going through corporate reconstruction. It was in development at Locomotive Games who had previously worked on one other title for the Wii: Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed. Locomotive Games was shut down in 2008 and on the 13th of November 2012, publisher THQ filed for bankruptcy, closing its doors forever and putting a

permanent end to B.E.A.S.T's chance of ever being revived. As for gameplay, all we really know is that it was going to be a third person shooter designed around the Wii remote and would have made use of Wii MotionPlus technology. The cover system would have been similar to the previous game in the series, Red Faction Guerrilla, and shared some similarities to the popular Gears of Wars series. The game was being developed on a new engine that was tailored specifically for the Wii but would have used the series' iconic Geo-Mod capabilities. Geo-Mod allows players to use weapons and vehicles to destroy and modify the environment and buildings, which could be damaged to the point of collapse. On the 15th of January 2008, some employees at THQ leaked a trailer and some screenshots of the game. Up until then, the game had not been announced. All of these screenshots and the trailer are available on the Unseen64 website. An analysis of the trailer reveals some more information about the cancelled game. While the video is of a low quality, it demonstrates some impressive lighting effects (for the Wii). Some scenes in the video were during the day and others at night suggesting the game would have featured a day-night cycle. The engine shows off some of the engine's capabilities with explosions, as well as reveal that the player character would be a male, but does not give his name and shows off two other character models: an enemy and a non-player male. It also shows off the exterior and interior of a model for a Military Transport Garage, implying that the player could explore indoor, as well as outdoor, environments. Lastly, the video shows off the models for a large solar array and a normal one, perhaps this is hinting that alternative energy sources would have been a theme in the game.

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SADNESS

Article by: Conor Hutton

Sadness was one of the first games announced for Nintendo's Wii, when the console still went by its codename Revolution. It was officially announced on the 7th of March 2006, along with a live action concept trailer which attempted to demonstrate the Wii Remotes potential. The game was being developed by Nibris, who in their lifetime as developers only released one game, Double Bloob, but they were behind other cancelled games such as The Children of the Night for the DS and Raid of the River for the Wii and DS. Nibris worked in collaboration with Frontline Studios, who worked on the game's programming, and Digital Amigos, who worked on the game's visuals. The teams were using the Gamebyro engine to develop Sadness. The game gained some positive attention for its black and white graphics with a gothic horror art style and its use of physiological horror over gory violence. The physiological horror would have dealt with themes such as narcolepsy, nyctophobia and paranoid schizophrenia. Set in pre WW1 Ukraine, the story would have revolved around Maria Lengyel, a Victorian era aristocrat of Polish-Hungarian descent. After their train to Lviv derails in the countryside, Maria has to protect her son Alexander who was blinded by the accident and was beginning to exhibit increasingly strange behaviours. In an attempt to make the player feel like they were actively participating in the game and not just going through the motions, it would have featured a branching storyline which was influenced by player actions and concluded in one of ten endings. The enemies in the game were

to be based on creatures from Slavic mythology such as the werewolf or likho. Nothing else is known about the story and there is very little known about the gameplay either. We do know that Nibris wanted to use the Wii Remote in innovative ways, for example using it as a torch and waving it to scare off rats. Nibris was also aiming for open ended interactivity between the player and objects in the world, for example anything that could be picked up could be used as a weapon, such as a beer bottle or a chair leg. To further increase the feeling of being immersed in the world Nibris opted to leave out a HUD and in game menu. The game's composer, Arkadiusz Reikowski, also released thirteen tracks from the unfinished game and the track titles may help shed some light on some of the game's features and locations. One track is called "Crawlers," which is probably the name of an enemy type in the game. A track called "Runaway" could be named after a fast paced chase sequence in the game, while a track called "The Mines" probably would have played during a level set in a mine. Another track called "The Puzzle" probably would have played in the background during puzzle solving sequences. It was mentioned earlier that the game received some positive attention for its art direction and themes, but it also received negative attention because no gameplay footage was released to the public, which made people doubt Sadness would make its Q4 2007 release date. Things only got worse for Sadness when Frontline announced that they had left the project due to artistic differences, and then Nibris stated the game was to be delayed until 2009. In both June 2008 and September 2009, Nibris claimed that the game was still in development but it lacked a publisher so as of then the game was in development hell. Destructoid stopped covering the game because they began to doubt it even existed in any form when Nibris failed to show at GDC 2008. N-Europe interviewed Adam Artur Antoliski, an ex-Nibris scriptwriter, in May 2009 and he said that disputes over game design led to constant failures to meet deadlines. When he was asked about Nibris' announcement that they would appear at E3 2009 he said "Nibris always was better at promoting than making anything." In the end Nibris did not even appear to promote at E3 2009 and Sadness missed its autumn 2009 release date. In February 2010, Nibris closed its official website and then on April 5th the game's composer, Arkadiusz Reikowski, released some unfinished tracks from Sadness to the public and revealed that the game was officially abandoned. In October 2010, Nibris transformed into a coordinator for the European Centre of Games and all of its projects were handed over to Blooper Team. As this article has demonstrated, ever since Sadness received its initial positive feedback, it has been on a complete downward spiral right through development hell and into total cancellation. However, Sadness did have a small glimmer of hope in 2014 when, on May 20th, Nintendo Life published an interview with indie developers Randy Freer, of HullBreach Games, and Jeremy Kleve, of Ctulhi Games, who claimed that they had acquired the Sadness IP. They said they were going to use the Unity engine to redevelop the game for a 2016 release on the Wii-U. Unfortunately for Sadness, its revival was short lived. In fact, it only lasted for a day due to the two developers taking back their claim and saying that they failed to secure the IP.

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WAVE RACE WII

Article by: Liam Robertson (Tamaki)

In 2009 Nintendo Software Technology, some of the developers behind Gamecube launch title Wave Race: Blue Storm, were attempting to get a new entry in the Wave Race series into production for Nintendo's Wii console. The project began midway into the year, in the aftermath of their previous Wii title, best known as 'Project H.A.M.M.E.R.', which was shut down after a tumultuous development of 5 and a half years.

'H.A.M.M.E.R.', which had evolved into the more casually oriented 'Wii Crush' by the end, was a costly misstep for both NST and Nintendo at large. Not only was the financial toll reaching into multiple millions of dollars, the company lost over half of its entire workforce during a staff exodus. Understandably, the ordeal left NCL with trepidations about entrusting NST with another large scale project, but a small team of developers at the company remained optimistic that the subsidiary could still see a resurgence. They proposed creating a new game in the Wave Race franchise for the Nintendo Wii, which would have taken the series to new territory with the introduction of motion control. The project was lead by experienced NST engineer, Yoon Joon Lee, and designer, Rich Vorodi. The two were previously a part of the last Wave Race game, Blue Storm. Partnering with engineer / programmer, Jonathan Bryant, they began to develop a test prototype to present their ideas to Nintendo's higher ups. At the heart of the concept was an experimental, new control scheme, which revolved entirely around the motion sensing tech of the Wii remote. Users would hold the controller in a horizontal position with both hands over its face, emulating the handlebars of a jet ski. Tilting left and right steered the direction of the watercraft, while twisting it forward and backwards controlled acceleration. The device would vibrate when the virtual handlebars were tilted to their furthest limits. By connecting a Wii balance board peripheral, it was possible to add an extra dimension of control to the game. Applying pressure to either side of the board would enable the player to perform sharper turns to help negotiate more trickier courses. An alternative system to the lone Wii remote was on the table also – in the form of the Wii remote & nunchuck combo. This worked by holding the two on their side, facing each other; similar to the controls of the 'Power Cruising' mini-game seen in Wii Sports Resort. It was theorised that adding these new, more physical control elements with "real world turning" and tilting would lend themselves well to Wave Race – helping to mold a more "realistic" experience for the player. On August 27, 2009, Nintendo of America filed a patent to protect the new control scheme that NST's developers had created. The filing covered not only controls for jet ski games, but all vehicles controlled by handlebars. In the patent's documents, for example, we can see that motorcycles were used as a primary example. After a brief development of no more than 3 months, work on the prototype concluded, and the group presented their pitch to NCL's board. One source related to the studio claimed it had generated considerable interest among members of Nintendo of America and NCL alike, but it was ultimately shot down. After the demo was tested by those present, complaints apparently were levelled at the game's motion controls; specifically, that they simply "didn't feel right". Nintendo therefore declined funding to the project, and full development did not proceed, ending work on it as a result.

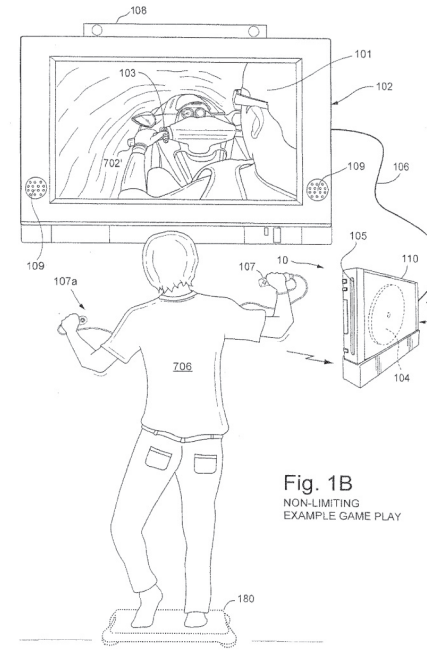

Fig. 1B
NON-LIMITING
EXAMPLE GAME PLAY

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WINTER

Article by: Conor Hutton

Winter was to be a survival horror game for the Nintendo Wii, developed by n-Space. Winter was first announced in 2007 with a demo, and according to n-Space's previous president, Ted Newman, the concept came about when Erick Dyke said he wanted "to take the survival horror genre and return it to its roots. Lately the genre seemed more about action and combat and less about actual survival." The developers wanted to introduce a more mature game for an audience outside of the hardcore gamers that played Wii. The game was heavily hinted at on IGN for a long time as being a "dark game in development for the Wii" until it was officially announced on January, 2007 as Winter. Winter was set in a small town in the Midwest where an unnatural snowstorm had settled and cut the town off from the outside world. It would have started when the protagonist, Mia, wakes up in the back of an ambulance suffering from amnesia. Mia's first goal in the game

was to try and stay alive while she figures out what is going on, a task made increasingly difficult with the ever decreasing temperatures and increasing levels of snow. As the game progressed Mia would have realised something lurking out in the snow, something that she is somehow connected to. The gameplay would have been made up of many different elements, most of which would have used the Wii Remote in unique ways. This would have included anything from a close-up inspection of objects to engaging enemies. All interactions using the Wii Remote were meant to feel like an extension of the player's arms, so you could use the A and B buttons to grip an object then move it around. The player could also grip door handles and open the door with speed or they could open the door slowly to peep in. The developers wanted as much real world interactivity as possible so players would often be faced with multiple choices in a single interaction, such as using a broom as a weapon to either bash with or snap in two and stab with. Searching for different ways to keep Mia warm would have taken up a large part of the gameplay. For example, the player could light a trashcan on fire to stay warm or switch on a car and use its heater. If you could not find a heat source, Mia would freeze to death. We also know there would have been a variety of enemies in the game from common wolves to the supernatural. The weather would have factored into the gameplay, like how a snowfall could block doors, forcing Mia to find other ways to enter buildings. While interactions with items took place in first person, the rest of the game was played from third person. The gameplay trailer ends as a humanoid monster slowly approaches Mia as her flashlight flickers. There was a few reasons publishers did not want to invest in it. Firstly they felt there was not a market for darker games on Wii, despite Resident Evils success on the console, and they also did not want to invest in a new IP because of the risks involved. n-Space president Dan O'Leary said it was difficult to pitch a game for the Wii because no other console could compare to it so there was no examples to fall back on. He also said that there was an attempt to turn Winter into a franchise with comic book and movie tie-ins but that also fell through. At its height, the development team for Winter consisted of twelve people who managed to put together a demo along with gameplay in six weeks, and it gained critical acclaim. Despite this, n-Space found it hard to get a publisher for Winter. However, the team at n-Space was not disheartened, and at GDC 2009 they revealed a new version of their demo which pushed the Wii to its limit by improving lighting and textures. In 2009, Dan O'Leary stated that they were still interested in finding a publisher, and that fans seemed interested, too. The last time we heard of Winter was in August 2012 when n-Space said it was "not dead" and that they had not found the "right opportunity" for it yet. In 2015 n-Space released their first independent title, Sword Coast Legends, published for PC, PS4 and Xbox One.

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Playstation 3, Xbox 360

Article by: Jade Avis, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Microsoft's second console - the Xbox 360 – was released in November 2005 worldwide, as the first entry in the 7th generation of consoles. Just as Sega did with the Dreamcast, Microsoft wanted to beat everyone on time, to gain some good margin and to sell more units before the launch of competitors' hardware. Taking advance of popular franchises and genres loved by the American market, games as Call of Duty 2, Amped 3, Perfect Dark Zero, Project Gotham Racing 3 and Quake 4 were all available on 360's launch, making it a great start for the console. In the following year Microsoft unleashed a huge list of successful titles to prepare their impact against Sony's PS3: The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, Prey, Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter, Splinter Cell: Double Agent, Dead Rising, Lost Planet, Just Cause, Rainbow Six: Vegas, Gears of War, FEAR, Viva Pinata, Saints Row and many more. The PlayStation 3 was released by Sony on November 2006 for Japan and America while it was released in March 2007 for Europe. As expected due to the success of Sony's previous consoles, it was not surprising that the Playstation 3 became such as triumph. In the following months PS3 owners could play with titles as Genji: Days of the Blade, Resistance: Fall of Man, Ridge Racer 7, Call of Duty 3, Madden NFL 07, Enchanted Arms, MotorStorm, Ninja Gaiden Sigma, Warhawk, Tekken 5 and Virtua Fighter 5. The PlayStation 3 included a Blu-Ray Disc reader, making it a good option for people that wanted to upgrade their film collection to Blu-Ray, similar to what Sony offered with the PS2 and DVD. Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 included their own online networks that allowed gamers to play online, download digital games and have access to early demos. PSN and Xbox Live became a successful way for small indie developers to sell their games to console owners, making possible for such titles as N+ (2008), Braid (2008), World of Goo (2008), Super Meat Boy (2010), LIMBO (2010), Castle Crashers (2010), Trials HD (2010), VVVVVV (2010), Bastion (2011), Journey (2012), Mark of the Ninja (2012) and Fez (2012) to became popular classics. Because of the huge success of the Wii, this generation was marked with the "motion controls fad" and even Sony and Microsoft jumped in with their Sixaxis, Playstation Move and Xbox Kinect, to let kids and families to waggle randomly in front of their TVs. Players could steer the controllers or their whole body in various directions and it would translate into a game, as it has been done in Heavenly Sword (2007), Flower (2009), Dance Central (2010), Kinect Adventures! (2010), Fable: The Journey (2012), Kinect Sports (2010) and Kinect Star Wars (2012). Fortunately there were also a lot of great traditional games released for both consoles, with such popular hits as BioShock (2007), Ratchet & Clank (2007), Halo 3 (2007), Assassin's Creed (2007), Mass Effect (2007), Fable II (2008), Fallout 3 (2008), Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts (2008), Resident Evil 5 (2009), Metal Gear Solid 4 (2008), LittleBigPlanet (2008), Devil May Cry 4 (2008), Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2009), Uncharted 2: Among Thieves (2009), Killzone 2 (2009), Final Fantasy XIII (2009), Call of Duty: Black Ops (2010), God of War III (2010), Gran Turismo 5 (2010), Heavy Rain (2010), Red Dead Redemption (2010), Batman: Arkham City (2011), Halo 4 (2012), Grand Theft Auto V (2013) and The Last of Us (2013). In the end, there were around 1,000 games released on the PS3 and the console has shipped about 80 million units as of November 2013. The PS3 was discontinued on September 2015, after the release of the PlayStation 4 in November 2013. More than 1.100 games were made for the Xbox 360 and the console shipped 84 million units worldwide before to be discontinued in April 2016, to make space for the Xbox One, also released in November 2013. We could say that apart from the unexpected mass-market success of the Wii, the 7th generation of consoles was another great competition finished almost on par, with a slightly better performance of the Xbox 360, thanks to its early release and better sales in Europe and America because of its focus on FPS and online multiplayer. Being a generation of consoles available on the market during the American and European financial crisis of 2008 / 2009, it's no surprise that there is a huge number of canceled Xbox 360 / Playstation 3 videogames. Gaming studios had to hire more and more employee to develop titles with complex 3D engines and detailed graphic, teams grown bigger, more time was needed to finish a project and development cost raised: even if they were able to release a game it had to sell millions of copies just to earn back what was invested. Creating videogames was a risky business, even more than before, and to cancel projects became a standard procedure to limit expenses and try to survive. Many companies fell into millions of debts and went bankrupt, lots of interesting games vanished with their closure, publishers switched resources to proven popular IPs and cheap casual games. Ambitious and original projects were seen as problematic and easy to fail due to an unstable market. We would probably need an entire book just to list all the interesting lost games planned for Xbox 360 and Playstation 3, but in the following pages we'll share some of the most iconic and fascinating ones that should not be forgotten.

ALIENS RPG: CRUCIBLE

Article by: Philip Dempsey

Aliens: Crucible, sometimes known as Aliens RPG, is a cancelled game that was being developed by Obsidian Entertainment for the PS3 and Xbox 360. Obsidian Entertainment was founded by former members of Black Isle Studios (developers of the Fallout franchise and the much acclaimed Planescape: Torment) after the company shut its doors in 2003. Obsidian's early projects were sequels to Bioware RPGs: Knights of the Old Republic and Neverwinter Nights. Obsidian was approached by Sega in 2006 to make a game to fit into the Aliens Franchise. Obsidian wanted to take the game in a different direction than the usual Alien adaption: "The problem with making successful horror games with the Aliens franchise is that the Aliens have been revealed... a lot. There is no mystery with them anymore. After 4 movies, countless comics and novels, countless video games – where the Alien and Alien variants have been killed multiple times, you have to tread new ground if you want to do something original. The horror with the Aliens no longer lies in the unknown, so we were going for the environment." Instead of taking on the role of a trained marine, an early build of the game would see the player take control of a junior officer on a cargo ship, the only supply link to a planet constantly affected by electrical storms, earthquakes and other natural phenomena on a daily basis. The Weyland-Yutani Corporation, seeing potential in the planet and its resources, starts a terraforming campaign to make the planet more habitable. However, during the operation, contact with the colonists is lost and the player's ship is asked to investigate. The game was designed to be a third person action RPG similar to Knights of the Old Republic or Obsidian's later project Alpha Protocol. Combat would be in real time with the player being able to select party members in real time to deal with problems. A major focus would be on finding and teaming up with crew members and colonists scattered around the game world. Each new party member would come with new equipment and abilities to help with exploration and combat. However, danger was everywhere and is something that would be constantly looming over the player's head. "This was a game of limited resources and perma-death. If a party member got face-hugged, your choices were to mercy kill them, put them in a sleeper and wake them sparingly if you need them, or let them pop – but the bottom line was that once they got impregnated they had an expiration date." The Xenomorphs would be a constant threat to the party. Along with the more familiar forms that fans would recognize, Obsidian planned on using new forms based on the local wildlife of the planet. "The first thing Josh and the concept artists did was to create the lifeforms the xenos would impregnate first. We also used some insect themes for the various xeno roles, from drones and scouts, to soldiers and queens. As covered in countless comics, novels, and films, the xenos take traits from their host, the idea being it would better enable them to survive in a dangerous habitat." Footage from an animator's show reel reveals that an alien queen was planned for the game, possibly as a boss battle. The same video shows some of the different forms the Xenomorphs could have taken. Development of the game continued until 2009 when Sega canceled the project. According to an interview with Obsidian CEO Feargus Urquhart from Kotaku, the cancellation came as a shock: "So what happened? Urquhart said they had a fantastic prototype - "The best vertical slice [Sega] had ever received" - but they couldn't quite turn it into a

good enough game. One Friday night in February of 2009, they sent a build of the game to Sega's producers. On Monday morning, they got a call saying that the Aliens RPG was cancelled. Sega didn't even look at the prototype they'd sent." One good thing that came out of the project was the development of the Onyx engine. Sega had paid Obsidian to develop their own tech for the game and with the cancellation of the project, they were free to use the engine in their future projects Dungeon Siege 3 and South Park: The Stick of Truth. In March 2015, Obsidian released Pillars of Eternity, a spiritual successor to Planescape: Torment funded through a hugely successful Kickstarter campaign that reached its target goal in 27 hours.

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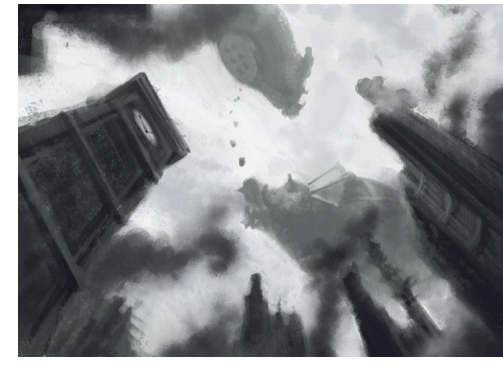
ANIMAL WARS

Article by: Liam Robertson (Tamaki)



Animal Wars was a tactical RPG for the Playstation 3 that was in development at Factor 5, Inc. (mostly known for such games as Turrican and the Star Wars: Rogue Squadron trilogy) between 2004 and 2006 with Sony Computer Entertainment on board as its publisher. It was planned for release some time after Lair, which launched in August 2007. According to one former employee, work commenced on the title in 2004, roughly around the time that pre-production on Lair began. It came about as a result of the multi-game contract Factor 5 signed with Sony to produce a number of games exclusive to their platforms. Until the deal expired, the company was set to have every project of theirs fully funded by the publisher, pending their approval. Every title worked on during this partnership was slated for release on the PS3 alone, and Animal Wars was one of them. Whereas Lair exhausted a great deal of the developer's resources from beginning to end, Animal Wars was a considerably smaller project, ongoing in the background for a number of years. Its team was comprised of no more than 4 workers total: 2 designers, 1 dedicated artist and a single programmer. The game was so low on Factor 5's list of priorities that every developer assigned to it was at some point repositioned to work on Lair and/or other proposed titles. Animal Wars was set in an alternate WWI universe with anthropomorphic animal characters, as one developer recalled. The assassination of the Archduke Birdinand (a parody of the historical figure Archduke Franz Ferdinand) in the game's opening served as the catalyst for the great war its campaign would have centered on. The event would have ignited a global conflict between various nations of animals (e.g., felines, bears, and foxes). Its developers were hoping to build a unique story-driven experience out of Animal Wars. They had envisioned a rich world with great attention to detail and even went about creating propaganda posters and vintage-style newspaper covers for inspiration. The enemy faction consisted of a coalition between Boarmandy (boars), The Black Paw (a rogue cat organization responsible for Birdinand's murder), bear soldiers, and the main villains, an army of wolves lead by the evil Isegrimm. An explosive introductory level was set to portray a savage air raid on a city inspired by London as perpetrated by boars in Big Bertha attack blimps. Players would have then found themselves following the exploits of a canine

in an aviator jacket, the planned protagonist, although other playable characters were being explored as well. Among the various mission types mulled over during pre-production was one that would have flipped the scale of battle on its head and seen the player taking up the role of a mouse. From this perspective, regular soldiers would appear as humongous titans by comparison as the mice performed daring espionage operations. Ultimately, this ambitious stage idea never got as far as being prototyped. One source likened its gameplay, of which very little was completed, to that of Valkyria Chronicles. It was intended to be a strategy RPG with a turn-based battle system and a unique oil-painted art style. The graphics were like those of Valiant Hearts but in 3D according to a former Factor 5 developer. Its concept of anthropomorphic warfare was deceptively innocent on the surface. Early sketches, for instance, depicted a number of particularly violent scenes, including a dog soldier posed atop a decapitated pig. Its artistic direction leaned dark in this respect, though it had yet to be determined how explicit the final product would be. In what was said to have been a large contributing factor towards Sony's willingness to fund it, the title was leveraging the work Factor 5's staff had previously done on the Star Wars: Rogue Squadron games. It called upon their experience molding that game's blend of ground and air vehicular combat, which the publisher was very keen to capitalize on. Boats and amphibious tanks would have featured, too. As explained by one of our sources, a central part of its concept was that each of the vehicles would have, in some form, attributes associated with different animals integrated into their design and functionality: "For example, I worked on making a jeep that would always land upright no matter how crazy you drove it (cat landing on all fours)." Why did Sony pull the plug on Factor 5's pet project? Among the few that contributed to Animal Wars throughout its lifespan, the enthusiasm for it was in abundance. One ex-member of Factor 5 even took to NeoGAF some years later to exclaim: "It was fucking amazing looking and was way better than Lair so it made all of us sad it got cancelled." One of our sources echoed these sentiments, saying that its apparent independence from Factor 5's higher-ups was much to its benefit: "I was more excited about Animal Wars than Lair because it was a smaller team and upper management left it alone (upper management interference greatly contributed to Lair's failure)." Despite this, none of the internal excitement for the project could ultimately prevent its demise, as the relationship between Sony and Factor 5 began to sour. In the beginning, the deal between them was forged primarily so that the San Rafael studio could reinforce the PS3's launch line-up with an original IP, which would later turn out to be Lair. Any other projects they got behind, Animal Wars included, were largely a show of good faith on Sony's behalf. Crucially, Lair was first scheduled to be available for the PS3 within its first few months on the North American market in Fall 2006. However, its development encountered many hurdles, chief among which were the higher-ups demanding the addition of motion controls and the team simply struggling to come to grips with the console's then-perplexing development environment. Factor 5 was already a company of limited resources, but Lair's troubled lifecycle lead to a number of departures mid-development. This left them unable to fulfill their end of the contract, and they thus requested that the game be delayed into 2007. The publisher's response was less than understanding. They promptly cut off all funding for Animal Wars and redistributed any monetary assets designated for it into Lair. The developers were not willing or able to self-finance the remainder of the project, resulting in its subsequent cancellation. The move also put an end to a number of other propositions, including a shoot-em-up called Virus and a 3D reboot of Turrican. One developer we spoke with detailed how the game had reached the prototyping phase when it was shelved but never left pre-production: "At the time, we had a working biplane, tank, jeep and 3rd person character working. We had a vertical slice of a damaged town that the lead character (a greyhound in WWI aviator outfit) and the tank was able to run around. We also had a pretty massive terrain for the biplane to fly around (similar in size to what ended up in Lair)." The former employee admitted that the prototype build suffered

visibility issues, which they had not yet been able to resolve when development came to a close. These were caused by the dark color palette employed by both its character models and environments, which would blend together unintentionally. Animal Wars was never officially announced, and its prototype materials were locked away by the management of Factor 5 during the company's closure in late 2008 / early 2009. During that time, the team was also working on a few new pitches for the Wii (such as a new Kid Icarus) and a Superman game for Brash Entertainment, but Nintendo did not like those pitches and Brash ceased all operations due to financial troubles. The loss of support from both Sony and Nintendo, along with the cancellation of their Superman project, was too much to handle, and Factor 5 had no more money to pay its employees. Lair was the last game released by F5, and because of all the problems during its development, the title was a critical and commercial failure, a sad end for a team that created some classic shooters that are still loved by many gamers.

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BANJO KARTING (THE FAST AND THE FURRIEST)

Article by: Brandon Funai, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Banjo-Karting also known as "Banjo Kazoomie" and "The Fast and the Furriest", was Rare's second failed attempt at a Banjo-Kazooie kart racer. While a first racing game prototype titled Banjo-Kazoomie was already worked on for a couple of weeks on the original Xbox (as you know from another article in this book), Banjo Karting was in development on the Xbox 360 a few years later. It's interesting to notice that the name "The Fast and the Furriest" was also a "reused" name as originally it was a title for an early Live Vision Camera party game, in development when Rare were still researching new motion-control methods before the Kinect was finalized. Rather than focusing only on Banjo characters, this time the team reached out to all of Rare's popular stars as Joanna Dark, Rash, Vela and Sabreman. Each character would have had their own vehicle with a peculiar style, and players would have been able to customize even further their car, choosing between a series of interchangeable preset parts (as the engine and wheels), somehow similar to the latest entries in the Mario Kart series. In Banjo-Karting we would also been able to use the Magic Wrench already seen in Nuts and Bolts (used to build vehicles) but this time available during races, which would have allowed to manipulate the environment (for example by destroying or building a bridge) and to pick apart opponents vehicles, to steal their parts. Another interesting feature planned for Banjo Karting would have been the ability to "morph" the car controls from "Racer" to "Offroader" styles: as the courses were to have different paths and feel players could use different handling depending on the path. The team also intended to have deformable terrain, the idea being that over the race the feeling of the course would change, creating unexpected situations. The game would have had a large attention to detail, like getting a speed-up from driving in the tire tracks of another racer ahead and lots of secret shortcuts to find. This would have been Rare's evolution of kart racers and could have been considered a spiritual successor to Diddy Kong Racing, as the planned "Donkey Kong Racing" for Gamecube was never completed. The Banjo Karting team was formed by joining the "handheld" Rare team and the team who did the Live Vision Camera prototypes ("Fast and the Furriest" and "Soul Catcher", a first person fantasy adventure). They wanted to make a "traditionally Rare" game: given that half the team had recently finished the Diddy Kong Racing port for Nintendo DS, a new racing game seemed a good fit. The actual code / development of Banjo Karting was just a few months, but they were able to create a fully playable track (including deformable ground in parts), the vehicles could change from Racer

to Offroader (but without the final models), it had an early multiplayer mode and rudimentary AI that would race around the course too. They were at a point to show the prototype to those at Microsoft Games Studio who could greenlight a project to be fully developed, but unfortunately Banjo Karting was canned just before this internal reveal. Former Rare developers we talked to remember that it was felt that Joy Ride (a casual kart racer originally announced at E3 2009 as a free XBLA digital game, but later expanded into a retail title to sell to Kinect owners) would have covered any "arcade racing" in the MGS portfolio and the prototype was quietly canceled. At the same time Kinect needed a big push and Rare became the main studio instructed to create good casual games for the add-on. Even if Banjo Karting would had continued, it would probably have been pushed onto Kinect, losing their original plan to create a classic Rare feel for core gamers. The team put a lot of efforts and had much fun creating such an original arcade racer and in the end they were unhappy with the decision as they didn't get the chance to pitch it properly. Probably the time was not right for a classic Rare project. Not all was lost however, as one of the car concepts from Banjo Karting was reused and modeled for Banjo to use in its appearance in the Xbox 360 port of Sonic & SEGA All-Stars racing. In the end, Xbox 360 owners were still able to enjoy a fun, classic multiplayer kart racer, driving around with Banjo, even if this game was not developed by the legendary Rare.

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CATACOMBS

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Catacombs (tentative name) is a cancelled FPS that was being developed in early 2010 by Cavia, a Japanese software house mostly known in the west for cult games such as Drakengard and Nier. Catacombs was supposed to be published by Square-Enix for PS3 and Xbox 360 but it was never officially announced, and the game's existence was revealed only in 2012 thanks to an article published on Siliconera. Catacombs followed the story of four characters (Gina, a college student; Matt, a tech CEO; Carlos, a bodega clerk; Nguyen, the son of Vietnamese immigrants), that found themselves trapped in the American Museum of Natural History after it got occupied and half-destroyed by mysterious creatures. According to Catacombs' narrative director Brandon Sheffield, interviewed by EDGE in 2013, the different backgrounds of the protagonists were more important than the basic plot: "each stage was about these people destroying their own fears and doubts and also their identity. They were supposed to be overcoming their sense of self, and how that related to their identity as an American, but also their otherness". Catacombs' gameplay was essentially a crossover between a RPG with random-generated dungeons and a team-based first person shooter (the CPU took control of the other characters in solo mode). Players could pick up magic weapons that change form and get new abilities at

certain levels: for example, the dragon-like magnum acquired wings and the possibility of using exploding bullets, while the shotgun's range increased with every upgrade. Aside from these weapons, the main characters also had at their disposal some magic rings that allowed them to cast spells such as cure, protect and decoy, or an incantation which created a replica of our avatar. Of course, the rings also attained new abilities if levelled up; for instance, the powered-up version of the decoy spell generated a special clone that exploded when shoot by enemies. In July 2010, Cavia was incorporated into AQ Interactive and they continued to work on Catacombs for Square-Enix, with the game that was planned to appear at E3 2011. However, the project was dropped right around this time, even if already in a playable form and with only six months of production left, because, apparently, Final Fantasy XIV was such a financial disaster that Square Enix was forced to cancel Catacombs and some other titles that were going to be published by the Japanese company (Fortress, Gun Loco, Highlander: The Game, Downfall: San Francisco). In June 2011 AQ Interactive merged with Marvelous Entertainment.

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DANGEROUS PARTY

Article by: Heidi Kemps

The Nintendo and Hudson co-developed Mario Party series proved to be a massive success for both companies, to the point where Hudson was often commissioned to create mini-game collections for other first parties like Sega (Sonic Shuffle) and Microsoft (Fuzion Frenzy 2). Sensing a trend of games skewing towards a more violent and gritty direction for older consumers, Hudson set about making a party game filled with over-the-top violence and mayhem. This was Dangerous Party, an Xbox 360 exclusive. Up to four players could compete in mini-games with a distinct, darkly humorous flavor to them. One game was a variant of the typical "push the other players off the the field" mini-game seen in many party games - only this time, the field was the top of a speeding bus, and getting knocked off would make your character splatter to the pavement below. Another game featured all the players tied up in a sinking submarine, and you needed to tap A many times in order to escape. However, you would ideally want to escape last, and just before you would drown, as you would receive more points for not wussing out and escaping immediately. This game was announced, along with a localization of the Xbox 360 Tengai Makyo: Ziria (Far East of Eden: Ziria) remake, at E3 2006. However, both games eventually failed to materialize on the market. There is no official reason why Dangerous Party was cancelled, but the game had a "gritty, adult" feel to it, and after the commercial and critical failure of Bomberman Act Zero, that angle probably looked far less appealing for both Hudson and gamers. The company continued to produce games - including several Mario Party installments - until Konami shuttered the company in 2012. The fate of the Dangerous Party team is unknown, some of its developers could now be part of NDCube. No images from the game are currently available.

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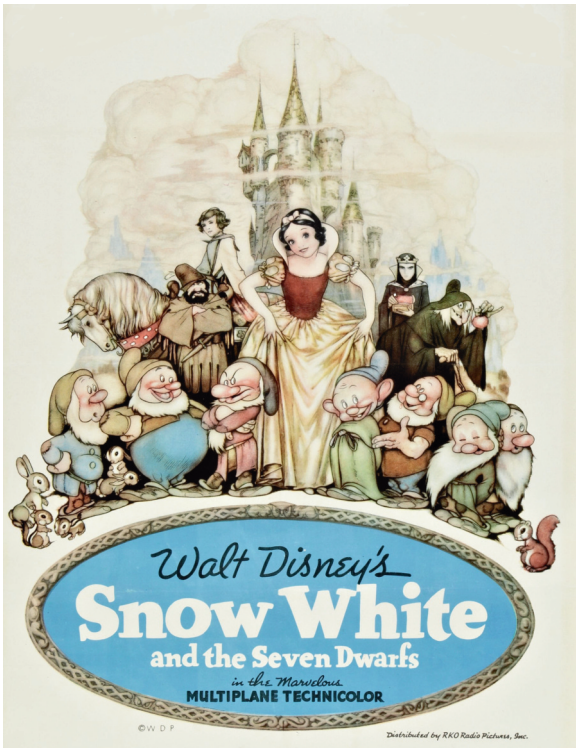
DWARFS

Article by: Philip Dempsey

Dwarfs (also known as "Seven Dwarves") is a canceled action adventure game from Obsidian Entertainment,



once planned for the PS3 and Xbox 360. The game was intended to be a tie in to a Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs prequel that was in development at the time. Both the game and the movie were planned to be cornerstones to a new franchise aimed at boys to go alongside its other properties. This wasn't Disney's first attempt at expanding the Snow White story. Walt Disney himself had considered it due to public and internal popularity of the characters despite his own dislike of sequels. However nothing ever came of them until the mid 2000s when Disney's home video department DisneyToon Studios decided to work with the story. Their idea was a prequel with a darker tone intended to explain the organs of the cast, taking inspiration from The Lord of the Rings. The plot would have been about the seven dwarves journeying together with a young girl to stop an evil wizard finding an ancient dwarven power. However, things are not what they seem as it is revealed that the dwarves have been manipulated by the young girl who is the daughter of the wizard. She betrays the dwarves and curses her father, proceeding to take over the kingdom and thus setting up the original movie. Soon after the project started, it began to develop an internal following. Many saw Dwarfs as the seeds to a new franchise to go alongside Disney's Fairies and Princess lines. In order to get the fledgling franchise off to a good start, a video game was proposed. Obsidian was approached due to their history and skills developing deep RPGs, such as Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II and Neverwinter Nights 2. The game, known as “Project New Jersey” internally, was intended to be a third person action adventure with a much darker tone than even the prequel movie. Kevin Saunders (game designer at Obsidian for such titles as KotOR2 and NN2) was the Lead Designer on Dwarfs, and he gave a short description of the opening of the game on his Formspring account: “This wasn’t a happy-go-lucky Disney game. Disney's Buena Vista Games wanted dark and I gave them dark. In the opening sequence, for example, you, as a teenage prince, awake in your bed to haunting sounds. Exploring the dark castle, you come across a terrifying shadowy creature that you kill in a desperate struggle – its cries shifting from a supernatural shriek to that of a human woman's bloodcurdling cry of death. The illusion is then dispelled, and your mother, the Queen, lays dead before you, the bloody knife that killed her in your hand. This wasn’t a cinematic – it was all a gameplay sequence that you’d actually play out“. Saunders's Formspring post also names some of the proposed team. Obsidian built a team of veterans for this project. Josh Sawyer (who was the lead designer for Icewind Dale 2 and later director for Fallout: New Vegas) was picked as the systems / combat lead. Brian Menze, a longtime artist for both Black Isle Studios and Obsidian, was doing the concept art for Dwarfs. Saunders described Menze work as “So much personality and character, reminiscent of Disney’s classic characters, but weathered by the grim realities of a dark fantasy world”. Brian Mitsoda, known for being a Writer for Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines, worked as the creative lead on the project and along with Kevin Saunders on the story. When asked about Dwarfs, he said: “If I could resurrect any project that I worked on, it would be this one. This was essentially our action-RPG version of a Pixar movie crossed with a first-party Nintendo game. I don’t know how much is still covered by NDA, but it was obviously inspired by Disney’s classic movies artistically, although script-wise we definitely wanted to capture the characterization and emotion of Pixar films. Conceptually, it was a darker fairytale type of story, but it was mostly focused on the journey of the teenage protagonists as they journeyed around the land meeting up with these eccentric little men and using their unique powers to advance through the plot. It had a lot of heart, great monster and character concepts by Brian Menze, and very interesting level potential.” With an enthusiastic and experienced team coming together and a plan set in place, things looked set for work to begin on a great new game. However, things weren't looking so good for the movie, with difficulty for Studio Executives and their desire to add their own touches to the film. Having to constantly fight

to keep the movie true to its original vision, director Mike Disa (who previously worked on such titles as Pocahontas, Fantasia 2000, Atlantis: The Lost Empire and The Origin Of Stitch) felt burnt out with the project. In particular, a repeated insistence by studio executives of having the character of Dopey to talk in the movie and then to explain his mutism in the original movie as trauma from watching his mother die. As Mike told during an interview with Integratedcatholiclife.org: "Essentially the studio executive wanted Dopey to talk! [Laughs in disbelief.] It just comes down to my respect for great films. Snow White is today still the best animated film ever made. Those characters are spectacular. It's a sad statement on our industry that the best film was 80 years ago, but it's still the best film. I would never walk into a sequel and do anything to disrespect the core of the characters like making Dopey talk." Around this time, Pixar's creative director John Lasseter took over Disney's animation departments and was reviewing the current projects. At first it seemed like Dwarfs would be safe but as the executives pushed for more influence, Disa's confidence on his project dropped. Not wanting to pitch an idea that he didn't believe in, Disa left the project and Dwarfs was canceled as soon as Lasseter got a look at the new script. This was also the end for Obsidian's game. Many of the team who worked on Dwarfs were sad to see it go. Brian Mitsoda described his feeling as: "I think if it had come out, it would be considered a classic today. It still hurts to know we'll never finish it. If DoubleBear (Mitsoda's own company) ever gets big enough, I would totally do something similar to it". His wife, Annie Mitsoda, described the game as her "One that got away". Feargus Urquhart, Ceo of Obsidian, talked about the game in an interview with Kotaku: "It was a lot of fun, we feel we turned in a really cool prototype. We worked on it for about a year. It's one of the games here that the team just loved working on. And unfortunately - which, it happens in this industry - you have changes of focus at a publisher." Since Dwarfs' cancellation, Obsidian has moved on to other high profile projects like Fallout: New Vegas, and other licensed games like South Park: The Stick of Truth. However this wasn't the last time Obsidian had a licensed game canceled on them: you can check out the article on Alien: Crucible elsewhere in this book. Other lost projects conceived by the team were Futureblight, a post-apocalyptic RPG for Take-Two Interactive, a couple of pitches for EA and Ubisoft, and "Project North Carolina", an open world adventure to be published by Microsoft for their Xbox One. After so many canned games Obsidian's future could have been bleak, but in 2015 they finally released Pillars of Eternity thanks to a successful Kickstarter campaign, and it was welcomed by gamers as one of the best RPGs of the last decade.

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FAITH AND A .45

Article by: Jesse Cook

Paying Homage to Bonnie & Clyde and road movies of the 1930s, Deadline Games' Faith and a .45 was poised to put players in the shoes of two rogue lovers ,Luke and Ruby, on a quest to rescue a friend from a corrupt oil tycoon named John Mammon. But, as the player digs further into the corruption and villainy of Mammon's plans, it becomes clear that a larger plot to overthrow the government and create a new "perfect business society" is in the works. As criminals turned vigilantes, the player and an AI or cooperative partner must traverse depression-

era America on a mission to stop Mammon before he takes control of a country at one of its lowest points in history. The now canceled Faith and a .45 looked to be a promising piece of genre gaming. Set in the 1930s during the American great depression, the game visually and tonally resonates with the desperation and anxiety of the times. Originally intended to be a straight forward recreation of the Bonnie & Clyde narrative, the game was eventually changed to steer Luke and Ruby away from killing civilians and police, as a then recent kerfuffle regarding Rockstar Game's Grand Theft Auto series made major publishers hesitant to release anarchic game series. Of the available videos and pieces of concept art, it is clear that Deadline (a Danish development company), intended to put the player in a world ravaged by the Dust Bowl. Much of the action in trailers for the game shows Luke and Ruby fighting in desolate dirt-caked shantytowns and train yards. It is a filthy brown haze of wind and dirt that gives the action a chaotic energy that seems to tie into the overall struggle to survive. In terms of game play, it appears to have borrowed from many other third-person shooters of the time, particularly Gears of War. Cover-based strategy is the core mechanic of the game, with only peripheral alterations and additions being used to supplement the core mechanics. As Søren Lundgaard explains in an interview with Game Reactor in 2008, "we don't try here to go out and be extremely innovative and say we have the new thing inside game play. We try to do something familiar and cool, but we twist it of course toward this setting, and toward the girl you play... with." While the game play looked familiar, it also utilized interesting twists to the genre like playing alongside the love of your life, rather than a fellow mercenary or soldier; something that appealed to many gaming news sites, like Complex which named Faith and a .45 one of its 25 most heart breaking video game cancellations: "While the setting was immediately attractive, it was the notion of playing a pair of lovers [that] was incredibly original." While this alteration to the standard militaristic third-person shooter sounds negligible, Deadline believed it to be dramatically different, since the team "needed to make the same game play, but without the feeling of [the player] commanding [Ruby] around. If you were shouting military orders like 'snipe him,' or 'attack this guy,' then she would just be pissed and leave you, and it'd be game over"). So the team implemented a system that allowed the player to give Ruby weapons, which would alter her play style: if Ruby has a shotgun, she plays more aggressively. It also appears to have implemented a minute, but fun alternative to explosives by placing gas cans on top of various barrels and other pieces of cover, which could be thrown and shot over enemies' heads in a slow motion feature. Overall, it seems that the team was focused more on storytelling over game play, as their interest in movie thematics and structure attest to. Much like their 2007 game Total Overdose, which was a nod to Robert Rodriguez films, Faith and a .45 was intended to represent road movies such as Easy Rider, Road to Perdition, and Natural Born Killers, while also taking into consideration both classic and contemporary Sci-fi and Fantasy narratives like Lord of the Rings and Star Wars. Lundgaard created Mammon, the game's central antagonist, as an Emperor Palpatine figure who bought up the Mid-West and lead an army of depression-era stormtroopers As traveling lovers initially looking for a kidnapped friend, the game would take players through a linear narrative that allowed the layers of depth in both characters to be exposed (Game Reactor). Adam Rishede, Art Director for Faith and a .45: "It's quite rare that you actually play with the love of your life. It's often implied in games that there is a flirt going on between a male and a female main character. But, here we actually start out as being an established couple, and that can really put the player in a situation... that you don't often see in games." It appears that the goal was to create a cinematic experience for the player that unfurled like a movie storyline, focusing specifically on the romance between the two main characters to set the game apart from its competition. As Lundgaard explained in a 2013 video on the background of Faith and

a .45, "we ended up with a razor blade called 'the world is dark, love is light.' The idea was to emphasize the love of Bonnie & Clyde, and make that stand out more". The game was inevitably put on hiatus after four years of development when the company failed to find a publisher. According to Kotaku's Luke Plunkett, even with "biplanes, tommy guns and a sexy ginger-haired lady," Deadline Games could not find a publisher to release the game, and on January 30, 2009 it was shelved. Deadline even attempted to re-skin the game as a post-apocalyptic shooter in the hopes of getting support based on the success of Bethesda's Fallout 3. Unfortunately, it did not work. As Justin Amirkhani and Larry Hester of Complex state, "sometimes though, love ain't enough; Faith and a .45 entered development hell when no publisher was willing to take a chance on romance." The game's cancellation is particularly surprising considering all the enthusiasm that surrounded it. While publishers were hesitant to put money into a genre that at the time could only be compared to Wild West shooters like Call of Juarez and Gun, many journalists were supportive of the game, and hoped for its inevitable release. Because of the failure of Faith and a .45 along with other canceled projects (Total Overdose 2: Tequila Gunrise, Killing Pablo Escobar, Shadow Hunter) the studio lost too much money and were not able to found new publishers to get support: in mid 2009 Deadline Games filed for bankruptcy and their last released game was Watchmen: The End Is Nigh.

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FIFTH PHANTOM SAGA

Article by: Brandon Funai

Fifth Phantom Saga was an unusual FPS in development by Sonic Team exclusively for PlayStation 3. It was originally shown at E3 2005, and later at Tokyo Game Show 2005. Sonic Team is mostly known for their platform games and the Phantasy Star Online series, so this would have been their one and only first-person shooter. Strangely enough, it was also to include magic elements and physics-based gameplay. The main character of Fifth Phantom Saga (abbreviated as FPS, just like First-

Person Shooter) was able to give orders to some kind of flying demon or ghost, commanding it to move boxes around, smash parts of the environment, light dark corridors, open magic doors, and attack enemies. While not officially cancelled, the game was not heard about since TGS 2005. A reason for this unofficial cancellation may have to do with the poor reception the game received at both E3 and TGS, with many criticizing the game's graphics and comparing them to that of a title on the original Xbox. Another reason may be that Sonic Team shifted resources to the new Sonic 2006 project they were developing around the same time for PS3 and Xbox 360. It's interesting to notice that by playing as Silver in Sonic 2006, it's possible to use telekinesis powers similar to the ones seen in FPS. When asked about Fifth Phantom Saga in an interview with PlayStation Universe, a SEGA representative simply stated "We have nothing official to confirm on Fifth Phantom Saga at this time." Unfortunately, Sega only released a few trailers for the game and people at E3 and TGS were not able to play any actual demo. Any more info on FPS' gameplay, plot, or other interesting features are not available. We can only remember Fifth Phantom Saga as a historical curiosity, being the lost FPS that Sonic Team never released.

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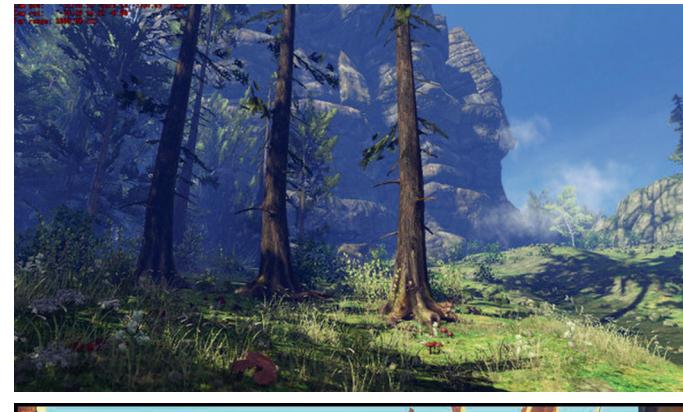
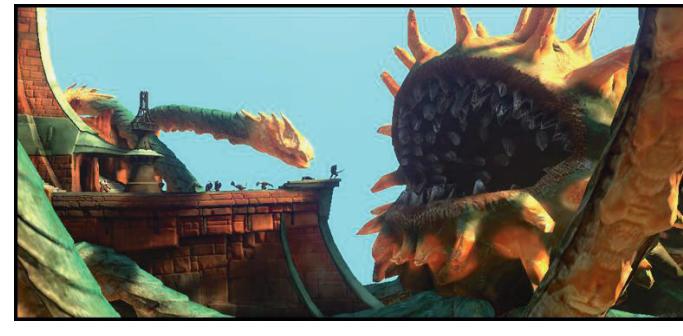
FINAL FANTASY FORTRESS

Article by: Sam Batten

Final Fantasy Fortress was a real-time action RPG that began pre-production in 2008, and was being developed by Grin to be released on PS3 and Xbox 360. Fortress was just a codename for the game as a final title was not chosen yet. The game was not originally going to be a Final Fantasy game at all, and was conceived as an original idea designed by Ulf Andersson, one of the founders of Grin. While the Grin team were developing this prototype alongside Bionic Commando for Capcom, Yoichi Wada from Square Enix visited Grin and loved what he saw. He suggested that Fortress could became a Final Fantasy spin-off. The original version of Fortress was to have a very Nordic art style and many of the enemies were said to be based on Viking tales. After it was decided the game would become a Final Fantasy spin-off, Grin decided to tweak the art style but still keep with an overall Nordic theme in a Final Fantasy world. It was then decided that the game would be set in the world of Ivalice, the world from Final Fantasy Tactics, Final Fantasy XII, and Vagrant Story, after the events of XII. Lead character artist Bjorn Albihn described Fortress as "a game with epic scale in both story and production values." There have been many screenshots and even a demo video released of the game, and there is no denying it looked beautiful, with a rich, yet incomplete open world to explore. There was also a character model created for an early boss which would be a giant Malboro, a popular Final Fantasy enemy. The player would have to scale the seaweed on the creature's back to be able to drop bombs on its weak points. Some concept art can also be seen of this boss. It was reported that there was a deal in place with Square for them to pay $16.5 million for the production of the game, to be paid with increments when the project would hit a

set of milestones within its development. This is where the trouble started for Grin, though. In an interview on Swedish site Nojes Bladet, Bo and Ulf Andersson, the founders of Grin, said, "they starved us to death." No money came in from Square for months. They kept up development on the game anyway, which cost the company a fortune and months later, still without any payment from Square, Grin were forced to close all other offices except the base office in Stockholm. What happened between Square and Grin? In 2009 Grin released two games that they had been developing: Terminator Salvation and Bionic Commando. Both of these games came out to very negative reviews and low sales, a fact that made Square nervous about the upcoming Fortress game. Ulf Andersson even stated in the same interview that Square were then demanding constant updates and all of the games assets such as code, artwork and music files. These requests took away time and resources from development, making it very stressful for Grin to keep working. According to Square, though, Grin were not meeting any of the milestones that were promised and this is why they had made no payments. The Andersson brothers also stated that Square were now not happy with the Nordic art style of Fortress and wanted them to change it to make it more like a classic Final Fantasy game. Grin then tried to change the game but Square was reportedly still not happy with the way it looked. Ulf says that he wanted to test Square, and so he sent them an image from Final Fantasy XII, but they still said that even this image was not in the Final Fantasy style. The relationship between the two companies was on the verge of breaking down. In late August 2009, Square officially announced to Grin that no payments would be made to the company. A few days later, Grin was forced to declare bankruptcy as Sweden has very strict laws on a company operating under a heavy debt load. Grin then released a statement on their official website: "It is with a heavy heart we announce today that GRIN has been forced to close its doors. This as too many publishers have been delaying their payments, causing an unbearable cashflow situation. Looking back at twelve years of games, titles such as Ballistics, Bandits, GRAW 1 & 2, Bionic Commando Rearmed, Wanted: Weapons of Fate, Terminator: Salvation, Bionic Commando and our unreleased masterpiece that we weren't allowed to finish; it has been a great ride." The unreleased masterpiece they are





referring to in this quote is the unfinished game Fortress. Today, the Grin website is completely unavailable. Fortress did not seem to be dead, though, as it was rumored that Square was still working on a game with the codename Fortress under the development of a different studio. Motomu Toriyama quashed those rumors though by saying Fortress "won't be released, suspended." Yoshinori Kitase was also asked if a Western studio would now ever develop a Final Fantasy game, which he replied "Quite honestly, we can't really see it happening." Although the game does not look like it will ever be developed again, there is a vast amount of screenshots and artwork on the Internet that document how beautiful the game looked while it was being worked on. In 2012, music director Erik Thunberg also released a track that had been created for the game that rearranged the "Prelude" music from the Final Fantasy series. Although the Andersson brothers' first company Grin had to be shut down, this did not keep them from game development, and they went on to create a new development studio called Overkill Software. This studio has released the very popular Payday: The Heist and Payday 2 both of which have sold extremely well.

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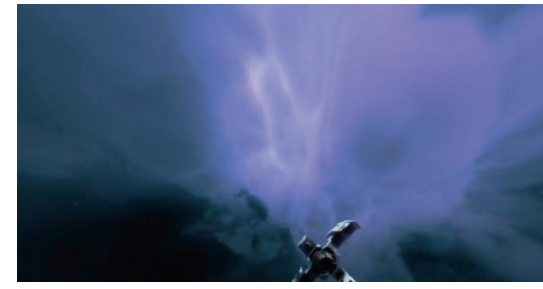
FREELANCER 2

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Freelancer 2 is the lost sequel to the cult-hit space trading and combat simulator developed by Digital Anvil and published by Microsoft Game Studios for PC back in March 2003. This new chapter was was in development for the Xbox 360 using a completely updated 3D graphics engine that allowed the team to expand on and enhance the features of the first game. Players would have been able to complete many different missions, freely explore the galaxy with customizable spaceships, gain immense wealth through trading materials, and engage in dogfights with space pirates. It would have been possible to visits planets and space stations of 48 known star systems and interact with their inhabitants in order to find the best weapons and equipment for both yourself and your ship. These would come in handy when other online players or CPU enemies attacked you regardless of your location. On a mission or exploring the great beyond, it wouldn't matter, they would find you online or offline. In some of these missions, the player would have had to protect traders from space pirates or, if you prefer, rob the traders and become space pirates instead. Thanks to the multiplayer mode, it would have been possible to interact with players from all around the world in online bounty-hunting and commodity trading. Players could even team up to form their own pirate gangs. In the single player campaign, the player would play as the protagonist of the first game, Edison Trent, to continue the story and find out what happened after the end of Freelancer. In 2004-2005 this project was the dream of many fans of space simulator games, but unfortunately it never came to light. Freelancer 2 was cancelled in November of



2005 when Microsoft closed down Digital Anvil. Most of the staff was deployed to Microsoft Games Studios headquarters. We don't know how much of the game was completed before the cancellation, but from the few images and videos leaked online, it seems that Freelancer 2 was still in early development and probably just testing the new tech engine. When Digital Anvil was dissolved into Microsoft, some of its developers left to create Embryonic Studios, which was later acquired by TT Games in 2007 to become TT Fusion. Most of their work was then focused on LEGO games for PC and consoles. Chris Roberts, one of the original founders of Digital Anvil (and the mind behind popular space sims Wing Commander, Starlancer, and the initial Freelancer concept), founded Cloud Imperium Games in 2011. Roughly a year later, CIG started a campaign to fund a spiritual sequel to Freelancer: the successful and record-breaking Star Citizen. As of February 2016, they have raised over $109 million from fans to create the most ambitious space sim ever conceived. Even if Freelancer 2 was never completed, we can assume that Star Citizen will offer every feature that the lost game promised, and even more.

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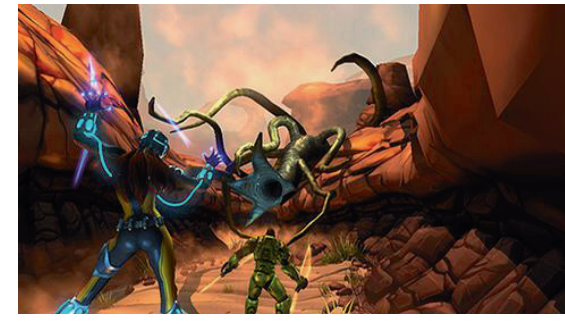
HALO MMO (TITAN, ORION)

Article by: Tristan Avery



From 2004 to 2007 Ensemble Studios, best known for creating the Age of Empires series, was working on a game that was planned to be a Halo MMORPG for the Xbox 360 and PC. Codenamed Orion, the game was intended to be a heavy contender against the then and still wildly successful World of Warcraft, even if Ensemble's concept started many years before. As we can read on Gamasutra, Orion was originally started in 1998, soon after Ultima Online came out, when a designer named Ian Fischer started pitching a sci-fi MMO named Titan. Many years later when Bungie was the main second party for Microsoft and Halo 2 was the hottest game on the market, the studio incorporated the Halo license into the sci-fi MMO and the codename was changed to Orion. In an interview with IncGamers (now pcinvasion.com) ex-Ensemble employee Dusty Monk stated: "You have to remember that Ensemble came from a standpoint of being really good at competing against Blizzard Entertainment. We had a pretty good history of knowing the types of stuff Blizzard put into their games to make them successful, and the kinds of things we'd need to put in an MMO to compete against Blizzard". Of these features included a "heroic stylized artform", an example of which can be seen in Star Wars: The Old Republic. According to Dusty, this style of art in a video game is "timeless" and would not wear with age like a more realistic graphic. Another feature they were working on that would eventually show up in The Old Republic is a cover system. They also were planning

on implementing a system where several people could work together to accomplish quests without being on the same team. Once again this feature would later show up in a different MMO, Warhammer Online. Screenshots and concept art of the project were eventually released online and featured both familiar and highly unfamiliar images to fans of the Halo series. Among the familiar included images of the iconic Warthog truck, several weapons such as a Covenant carbine, and various suits of armor reminiscent of the armor the series' protagonist, Master Chief, wears. Michael Zenke of Massively.com analyzed the HUD display in some of the screenshots and made observations that further prove Dusty's claims that the game was specifically designed to rival Warcraft. Among these observations was that one of the bars in the game looked very similar to a UI mod known as "Titan Panel" in Warcraft, which is supposedly a favorite among fans. Other observations led him to conclude that the game featured a "scion" meter, a skill tree and some sort of trophy system. None of these features have been definitively confirmed. Scant details were released about the story of the game, only that it would take place further in the past of the series when the Covenant, the villainous alien race in the series, "wasn't the covenant yet". Therefore there would be more playable factions in the game besides the humans and the Covenant. The game was also described as being more action oriented than other MMOs on the market at the time. The leaked screenshots suggest that the combat would include close range and long range attacks utilizing guns and some sort of magic system. Despite having a devoted team and a substantial budget, the game was ultimately cancelled before it was ever officially announced due to Microsoft's decision to get rid of Ensemble Studios. According to several interviews, the successful company was disbanded due to Microsoft's desire to go after a broader, casual audience similar to what Nintendo was attracting with the Wii, and the games Ensemble were working on (Agent - a cancelled action adventure, Bam - a Ratchet & Clank-Style Platformer, Nova - a "Diablo in space", Sorcerer - a fantasy adventure RPG, and a prototype titled "Wrench") did not fit into that demographic. They were permitted to finish one final game, Halo Wars, before being shut down completely in January of 2009. A majority of the team members would go on to form several successful video game companies, largely in the mobile games market. Ensemble's Co-founder Tony Goodman and others would go on to create Robot Entertainment, famous for the Orcs Must Die series. David Rippy and others would found Bonfire Studios, which would eventually be bought by the massive mobile / social game company Zynga. Brothers Paul and David Bettner would go on to form NewToy, which would also be bought by Zynga after developing the extremely popular "With Friends" series of games. Dusty Monk went on to form Windstorm Studios but would later join Robot Entertainment after mediocre success. In addition, several members such as Greg Street would go on to join their rival company Blizzard.

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HEAVENLY SWORD 2

Article by: Sam Batten

The first Heavenly Sword game was a PlayStation 3 exclusive developed by Ninja Theory that was released in 2007. Heavenly Sword came out to positive reviews, and the lead character Nariko became a favourite among

fans. It had a fun combat system, a great story, beautiful graphics and some of the best hair seen in a video game. These factors would normally be enough to warrant a sequel, especially as the IP was owned by Sony - meaning that if Ninja Theory wanted to work on a different game, Sony could get another developer to work on it, which is exactly what transpired. Unfortunately that sequel was never released. What makes this even more interesting was that the game was originally intended to be a trilogy. SCE Cambridge started developing the game in 2008 but it did not seem to make it very far at all. Since there was no announcement from Sony that the game was being developed, there was no actual official cancellation. A CV of an ex-SCE employee, Martin Binfield, showed that in 2008 he was working on game concept design and character animation for Heavenly Sword 2. This was the only information available until 2012 when alleged concept art from the game started appearing on the Internet. Siliconera was first to report these images which showed some elements that may have been included in the game. According to Siliconera, the enemies were going to be the Ravens and the Raven King (a major boss in the first game), they also looked to be heavily influenced by samurai. There were also some enemies who looked to have insect-like shell armour and they were all described as vain and evil. There was also a pair of characters that were chained together and were described as the comic relief in the game as they had differing personalities and would argue with each other. The only other real details that surfaced was that there would be a nomadic caravan race of people, and Nariko would still have her trademark long flowing red hair. This concept art must be from the SCE studios, as Dominic Matthews from Ninja theory spoke to VG247 and said “[this is] not Ninja Theory art. Sony owns the Heavenly Sword IP, whether or not they dabbled with new concepts independently of us is not something I can comment on.” It is no surprise that Ninja Theory was not working on this game as they were developing Enslaved and the Devil May Cry reboot. SCE Cambridge was an obvious choice to develop this game as they co-developed the original with Ninja Theory and also was a Sony owned company. In 2013, SCE Cambridge became Guerrilla Cambridge and as the renamed company released Killzone: Mercenary for the PlayStation Vita. They are also rumoured to be working on an unannounced title for the PlayStation 4. SCE Cambridge seem to have had a lot of cancelled games: an unannounced sci-fi action game, Legion, and Popcorn are just a few examples. Hope for a Heavenly Sword sequel was slightly dashed on May 21, 2008, when IT Manager “Peonic” announced that a follow-up to Heavenly Sword would be extremely unlikely due to Ninja Theory's decision to pursue opportunities within multi-platform development. "We’re not abandoning Heavenly Sword (HS) just on a whim because we want to go off and do something different - there’s a great huge raft of reasons behind us taking the direction we are - and it’s also the nature of the business that I’m not allowed to share any of those reasons with you. As for the ‘you’re just not doing HS2 NOW’ comments - well one thing you learn in this industry is that you never say ‘Never’. So I’m not going to say we’ll 'never' go back and make HS2 - but it’s something I personally see as extremely unlikely." Ninja Theory boss Tameem Antoniades also said that “I had this idea that you would play Nariko who finds herself trapped in Hell by the spirit of the sword, Kai would be playable in the real world and would communicate with Nariko and try and help rescue her soul.” He also went on to describe how one day in Hell for Nariko would be an entire year for Kai on Earth, with Kai transforming from “teenage girl to old woman.” An announcement of a new Ninja Theory game came in 2014 and it had a female character as the lead who also wielded a sword - but the game was called Hellblade. Despite the different name, many thought that this was still a sequel to Heavenly Sword. This, paired with the quote above saying about he envisioned a sequel, this theory really made sense especially as the playable character in the video looked like Kai from the original

game. This wasn't the case, however; after Eurogamer confronted Dominic Matthews of Ninja Theory in an interview. He was asked if it was a sequel to Heavenly Sword to which he outright denied, saying “No, it's not, it's a brand new IP. Senua is a new character. It's not tied to Heavenly Sword at all.” In the same interview he went on to also deny that the game was even a spiritual successor. It seems the company really wants to distance Hellblade from Heavenly Sword. Hellblade does not have a release date as of this writing. We're sure from what has been shown, even if it is not meant to be a sequel or even a spiritual sequel, there will be no doubt a sense of familiarity with the upcoming game.

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KAMEO 2

Article by: Matt Redmond

Kameo 2 is the canceled sequel to Kameo: Elements of Power, a project that was in development by Rare Ltd.. It was to be published by Microsoft Game Studios for the Xbox 360. The first game was initially announced for Nintendo’s GameCube in 2001, but the title was switched to the original Xbox when Rare was sold to Microsoft in 2002. The Xbox version was later canceled too, and in November 2005 Kameo was finally released as one of the launch titles for the new 360. One of the main mechanics of Kameo was the ability to shapeshift the protagonist into different creatures that can be used to to fight in combat or to solve puzzles. The main character design was changed slightly from the orignal GameCube version. Kameo was still set in a fantasy kingdom, with a bright cartoony graphic style and story. Kameo 2 was instead planned to be much more “mature” than the original, showing an older Kameo in a semi-realistic graphic style and exploring darker themes within the game's settings and story. It’s possible that Microsoft wanted to try to sell the game to an older demographic, by creating a gloomy action adventure in a huge collapsing world. The project was never announced officially, but in 2009 a few screenshots and videos were leaked online confirming that it was once in development. From what it was possible to see from the short footage, Kameo 2 would have had climbing and parkour style moves similar to Assassin’s Creed, other than a pair of curved knives to use as weapons. Not much more information was available on Kameo 2 until Rare released their Rare Replay Collection, with bonus videos for some of their lost games. In the video for Kameo 2, more concept art was revealed, sharing some new information about the project’s

features and failure. It seems that the world of Kameo 2 would have been affected by evil forces and the protagonist was going to be possessed by a strange, dark entity. Kameo still wore similar necklaces and jewelry from the first game, mixing old elements with her new design. The transformations from the original game were to make a reappearance, as more dangerous and aggressive creatures. Kameo would also have been able to use her "inner darkness" to gain a new special power in combat. Some sort of stealth elements were planned too: the protagonist wore a long cloak that allowed her to hide in the shadows and ambush unsuspecting foes. Rare's senior Software Engineer Nick Burton said that Kameo 2 started development in 2007, but even if the team was able to create an early playable prototype, it was soon canceled due to Microsoft restructuring the studio to focus it on the casual-games market. It may have also been because of the poor sales of the original Kameo. After a few years of being a Kinect-centric development team (creating such titles as the Kinect Sports series); in 2015 Rare finally announced a new original game, the pirate MMORPG named Sea of Thieves.

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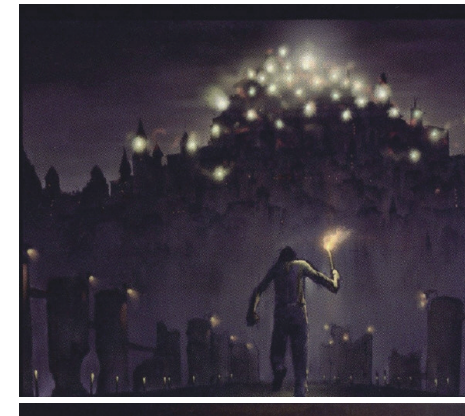
KURAYAMI

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)



Kurayami is a cancelled psychological / horror game that was pitched by Grasshopper Manufacture as a PS3 exclusive, and originally announced in Edge Magazine issue 162, in May 2006. Being inspired by Franz Kafka novels (a writer known for his stories about alienation, physical and psychological paranoia), in Kurayami players would have had to explore a mysterious European castle (that we can relate to Kafka's The Castle) and the nearby village filled with creepy inhabitants, using the light from his torch to resolve puzzles and move through the darkness. Light and darkness would have been a central theme in the game, similarly to what happens in Alan Wake (announced in 2005 but released in 2010). In Kurayami the protagonist would have been safer in lit areas while dangers would have been lurking in the darkness. Talking about this concept, Goichi Suda said: "When I considered the visuals, I immediately thought of darkness, and I imagined a hero within this night, with a light that would in a way symbolise his life. That became the core concept of Kurayami: literally, 'darkness' (in Japanese). [...] It's not about some hideous monsters or evil creatures coming out of the darkness, but playing on our natural fears of the dark, and the uneasiness that comes from the absence of noise and life. [...] Kurayami's ideas are not about violence or eroticism, but fundamental problems in the human mind, which may find some conflict with the rating system. [...] Though I expect the rating level to be quite high for Kurayami, I also expect the PS3 to be mainly purchased and used by an adult audience. I'm making a game for an adult audience, one that shows what life is and what being human is." Players would have had to pay attention to the townsfolk too, as the game would have been ambiguous about their

intentions and personality: “It shows how people change when faced with their fears – in a way, you could see a little bit of what Japan, or the world, is like in this town.” While there are no in-game screenshots available (only the concept art originally published in Edge) it’s known that Kurayami would have used a cell-shading style focused on the contrast between colors and black, evolving the 3D engine Grasshopper already used in Killer7. From what was said by Suda during an interview with Joystiq in 2009, it seems that the game never entered into a prototype form: “It’s not even in development right now. We aren’t even really working on it. We’ve just been talking about it, but there hasn’t been time to work on it. Actually it was really just for Edge. The artwork was just something we submitted them. We’re not working on this project yet. They had some special coverage about Grasshopper and we talked a little bit about Kurayami, and so we gave them some artwork.” Originally, Suda51 told Edge that they wanted to make Kurayami appealing to more people than their precedent games, saying that “The challenge now is to go beyond simple recognition, and transform our original games into a mainstream success”. Only a year later Grasshopper released No More Heroes for the Wii and it became their most successful game up to that point. While Kurayami sounded like a dark, introspective and uneasing experience with European inspired environment and characters, No More Heroes was an explosion of over-the-top action, Japanese fanservice and quirky personas. This could have been the reason why Kurayami was quietly cancelled: in the next few years the team was busy developing Zero: Tsukihami no Kamen (Wii, 2008, a new chapter in the popular Fatal Frame / Project Zero series) and No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle (Wii, 2010), supporting Nintendo’s motion-controlled console and finding a new market for their projects. While Kurayami was never released, its main concept of light and darkness was reused for another Grasshopper Manufacture title: Shadows of the Damned. SotD was a much more linear, over-the-top horror / action game than what Kurayami appeared to be, and even if the released project is a good one, unfortunately there’s no trace of Kafka influences anymore.

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INSANE

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

inSANE is a cancelled psychological survival horror game that was in development from 2010 to 2012 by

Volition, Inc., the team behind such games as the Red Faction and Saints Row series, in collaboration with film director Guillermo del Toro, popular for such movies as Mimic, Pan's Labyrinth, The Devil's Backbone, and Crimson Peak. The game was planned to be published in 2013 by THQ for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and PC. inSane was announced in December 2010 at the Spike Video Game Awards, with a short teaser trailer that did not show much more than the game's title. Del Toro is quite well-known for directing intense and highly-disturbing movies that are full of weird creatures and surreal environments. One of the key designers was going to be popular comic author Guy Davis, known for Sandman Mystery Theatre and Hellboy, so excitement for the project was very high. This interesting collaboration could have created a high-quality psychological survival horror that could have easily rivaled the best chapters in the Silent Hill series. Unfortunately there is not much information available about how the game would have been played or what kind of story del Toro conceived for this project, but from the few preserved pieces of concept art and 3D models, it looks like we would have had to survive against different kinds of freakish demons and organic monsters. Talking about the project, del Toro said: "With this new series of video games, I want to take players to a place they have never seen before, where every single action makes them question their own senses of morality and reality. THQ and Volition, Inc. are equally excited to make this vision of a completely new game universe into a reality." Unfortunately, THQ was going through tough times. In 2011, they released their "uDraw GameTablet" for Wii, a peripheral targeted at the casual market that received enough success (about 1.7 million shipped units) for them to develop Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of the accessory, as well. Sadly, the decline of the casual market for consoles was striking and the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions were huge failures, bombing hard and leaving THQ with millions of useless, expensive accessories that they were not able to sell. The decision to focus on the casual gamer market and create the drawing peripheral is rumored to be one of the main causes of THQ economic collapse. Though in early 2012 they tried to get back to the "hardcore" market, their total losses were too high (about $240 million) and the company was not able to regain its strength, completely closing down for bankruptcy in December of the same year. As they tried to cut their expenses on projects that did not have a consolidated IP or secure profits, THQ officially cancelled inSane in August 2012 and the intellectual property rights were fully transferred to del Toro. In November 2012, Guillermo said that inSane was still in development with a different team and publisher, but nothing further came out of that. As of October 2015, the game seems dead for good, especially considering what happened in years following its cancellation between del Toro and the gaming industry. In 2014, it was announced that Guillermo del Toro and Hideo Kojima were working together on a new game in the Silent Hill series for Konami. Fans were excited and the P.T. demo released for Silent Hills created great anticipation for this promising project, but sadly this survival horror was not much luckier than inSane. Silent Hills was canned only a year later due to internal restructuring and changes of marketing focus by Konami, a series of decisions that led to Kojima being fired from the company and his team being disbanded. After this shocking news, del Toro felt burned from the gaming world and during an interview with Shacknews, he said: "I have proven to be the albatross of video games. I joined THQ, and THQ goes broke. I join Kojima, and Kojima leaves Konami, because Metal Gear. I have decided, in order not to destroy anyone else's life, I have decided I will never again get involved in video games. Otherwise, I'll join someone and his house will explode, or something". Not all hope is lost, however, as a few months later, Guillermo announced via Twitter that he had talked with Kojima about working on a new project together. At the moment, it is still unknown what kind of project it could be and if it will ever be released. Volition, Inc. is still working on the

Saints Row series with publisher Deep Silver, having released Saints Row: Gat Out of Hell in January 2015, and it is likely that they are already working on a “next gen” chapter for Xbox One and PS4. inSane could have been a great game for survival horror fans and we really hope to be able to preserve more images and info about this lost project in the future. We can speculate that some of the concepts and the story that del Toro conceived for inSane could have been reused in Silent Hills, but the “Guillermo curse” killed both projects. Will Guillermo ever be able to enter into the gaming world? We can only wait and see.

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LMNO

Article by: Fernando Garcia, Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

In 2004 Neil Young (at-the-time executive at Electronic Arts) talked at the Game Developers Conference, explaining how it would be a milestone for the industry if a game would make players cry. One year later, the company established a partnership with Steven Spielberg to produce three games, one of which was codenamed LMNO. The game would feature parkour-like action in first person and a deep, involving relationship between the two main characters. LMNO was named after consecutive letters and was not an acronym. The other two projects involving the popular movie director were PQRS, a puzzle game released for the Nintendo Wii under the name of Boom Blox, while the third one was never mentioned to the public. LMNO was their most ambitious concept, and was in development at Electronic Arts Los Angeles and their Blueprint studio. Players would take control of Lincoln, an everyman who would rescue an alien-looking girl named Eve from the future. He was drawn to an Area-51-like location where he would find and rescue her, and the two would need to escape from the government's agents together. The first person parkour-style gameplay had many similarities with another EA game in development at the same time, Mirror’s Edge, but LMNO had a stronger focus on the player’s feelings for Eve, with an open ended storyline with multiple paths. As the two main characters did not speak the same language, non-verbal interactions would be the main method of communication, such as moving around, offering items, and reinforcing Eve's behavior. For example, in a short video released after the game’s announcement, Lincoln pushes a flower vase towards Eve, who looks confused. He then gets closer to the flower and sniffs it, showing her what she needs to do. Eve, with her overly-expressive face and fingers, sniffs the flower while hovering her hand around it, learning something new about our world and her new friend. Eve was not made to be a sex symbol in the game. She

had exaggerated body formation, such as an extra joint in each leg to move more nimbly, large eyes for distinct facial expression, and lanky fingers for smooth movements. Another aspect of the game that was quite original was its length and replay value. Although the typical length for an action-adventure game at the time would be around 8 hours, developers wanted to make LMNO a game to be played and finished in about 3 hours, but multiple times. You would be able to casually play and enjoy the gameplay thoroughly, and as every different interaction with Eve and environmental choice would affect the characters' relationship and endings, you would have a different experience every time you played it. If you were very active and made decisions, such as which direction to go or which door to open or lock, the AI would just follow you and wait for orders; meanwhile, if you were slower and Eve had to make the decisions, she would, but she would be upset at Lincoln for not being of much help. One of the multiple endings would even show her betraying you and turning Lincoln into the government. As said by a former team member to 1UP: “The point of LMNO was to basically take all the AI that would go into a normal Sims title, and compress that down into one character that could learn and remember and change the way you play the game on the fly, and not be totally scripted.” Despite its creative ideas, LMNO had a hard time during its development, being cancelled twice. At the time the relationship with Steven Spielberg was set, EA did not have a team for the game. They hired Doug Church, who previously worked at the fan-favorite developer Looking Glass Studios, who made System Shock and Thief, and Eidos to build a small team and work on the project from Los Angeles. Spielberg's contribution was mainly in meetings, to give general directions to the game and hints about how characters would have reacted in their relationship. The team also outsourced some content to other teams like Arkane Studios, who are known for their work on Dishonored. Another former EA developer noted: "I remember getting an early, early, early build of Mirror's Edge [...] They had the basic running, jumping, and wall-running mechanics in, and it was pretty cool even at that stage... but there was a perception that both teams were kind of fighting for development dollars. DICE has become a big name in EA over the last couple years, but two or three years ago, you'd put your money on the Spielberg game rather than Mirror's Edge." In 2008, due to hardships caused by the American and European financial crisis and the need to make some choices regarding investment and spendings, EA closed down some offices and laid off approximately 1,500 employees. Being an over-ambitious project, LMNO was seen as a risky investment and part of the team was fired. Neil Young left the studio in June 2008 and became the founder of Ngmoco, a developer and publisher of social and mobile games. EA was still interested in LMNO, as the collaboration with Steven Spielberg was great for marketing reasons, but they wanted to make it a simpler and more profitable project. By cutting costs and cancelling another game they were working on called “Camacho” (set in the Command & Conquer Generals' universe), EA merged the remaining developers from both teams to have them create a new version of LMNO. Doug Church was still in the studio when these changes happened, but left the company in early 2009. LMNO’s ambitions, real time learning AI, complex relationship system, and sandbox gameplay had to be cut down for it to have a chance to be completed. With a new executive producer, Matt Sentell, and still counting on Steven Spielberg's cooperation, the project became more streamlined and linear, described internally as an "Uncharted game directed by Spielberg". The game would be more action-focused and in third person. Eve became a good looking Megan Fox-like alien to be more appealing to young male players, and the feelings and interactive relationship between the two characters were dumbed down. With the new tentative title of “The Escape Artist”, new story elements were added as well: Eve would have had some kind of virus that would be highly infective to humans, and it would decimate humankind if not treated in time. Lincoln and Eve would then need to escape from the government agents and find the cure. This second version of the game was finally canned in late 2009. There was still too much work to do, lots of money to spend to continue its development, and even with Spielberg’s name, EA were not sure if “The Escape Artist” would ever be a commercial success. The game would have had to sell many millions of copies to turn out profitable. With all the money already invested in over two and a half years and not much to show, the team wasn't able to impress management. EA was also shifting towards a casual- and online-focused approach to new games, and while they laid off more than a thousand employees from their traditional teams, at the same time they bought out Playfish, the studio behind a few popular social games on Facebook. In the end, the entire team creating LMNO left the company due to layoffs or parting ways, and for now all we have left from this ambitious project are two short video clips and a few images. At least their other first person parkour game, Mirror’s Edge, was successfully released in 2008 and became a cult hit. A sequel titled Mirror’s Edge Catalyst, was released in 2016.

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LEGACY OF KAIN: DEAD SUN

Article by: Conor Hutton

Legacy of Kain: Dead Sun was a game cancelled by its publisher Square Enix in 2012. Dead Sun would have been the fifteenth game in the Legacy of Kain series if you include all planned games, or the sixth game if you only count released titles, so the series has a history of being cancelled. Square Enix wanted Dead Sun to be a hard reboot of the series with both single player and multiplayer components. The single player component of the game was to be handled by Climax Studios, a team founded in 1988 and situated in Portsmouth, South East England, employing 120 people. They have previously worked on games in the Silent Hill series, Serious Sam: Next Encounter, Sudeki, Bloodforge and on Assassin's Creed Chronicles: China. The multiplayer component of the game was handled by Psyonix (Unreal Tournament 2004) and was released in an open beta form on January 2015 under the name Nosgoth. The development of the game was also being overseen by Crystal Dynamics, who had worked on previous Legacy of Kain games. Dead Sun started out as a small project being developed on Unreal Engine 3. It was originally intended to be a download-only title for PS3 and Xbox 360, then it grew to become a full retail game and was eventually in development, as a launch title, for PS4. It is unclear if the game was considered for Xbox One or PC. The game was in development for three years before it was cancelled and the developers had even put together a CG trailer to reveal Dead Sun, under codename Blackcloth, possibly to be shown at E3 2012. Square Enix also asked Climax Studios to come up with a new set of main characters for the series and a story set in the same universe as other games in the Legacy of Kain series, while not being a direct continuation of any of those games. In Legacy of Kain: Defiance, Kain and Raziels time travel stabilized Nosgoth's distant future, and Dead Sun would have taken place centuries after Defiance. Plant life would have reappeared in Nosgoth and humans would have once again spread far and wide across the lands, setting up trading towns and worshiping the sun. However, nothing lasts forever and eventually tragedy would strike the human race in the form of a mass sterility plague. An evolved version of the vampires from the previous games arrive to Nosgoth in this era. A 32 minute video of some gameplay, from early on in Dead Sun, was leaked online and revealed quite a lot about the game, so it will be referenced throughout the rest of the article. One thing the video showed off was the game's combat, which is similar to the Batman Arkham games or the God of War series. When an enemy has been hurt badly enough a red skull appears above their head indicating that you can use a finisher move. In one finisher move, shown in the video, Asher disarms an enemy and kills them with their own axe. The combat could be described as fast, violent and cinematic. Various enemy types add an extra depth to the combat. Some enemies shown in the video are wielding axes, crossbows or axes and shields, which can be broken if Asher leaps at them from a wall. Asher uses Gein's own natural weapons such as his claws, which are a part of his body. When the player kills enemies in the material world, they can use Gien's ability to shift to the spectral world to collect their souls, which are used as a currency; this is demonstrated in the leaked video. Instead of dying when your health is depleted, Gein's body is destroyed and returned to the spectral world. There you must fight multiple enemies to gain souls which will replenish your health bar and allow you to shift back to the material world. When you return to the material

world, the enemies who destroyed your body will still be there but any enemies previously killed will remain dead. The other option is to avoid having your body destroyed in the first place by retreating from combat and allowing your health to recharge. Another feature demonstrated in the leaked video was the game's upgrade system. In order to upgrade your abilities you must collect souls, which as mentioned in the previous paragraph, are used as the game's currency. It appears that you can upgrade multiple abilities for Gein's body including his weaponry. They also suggest that the game would have rewarded exploration and traveling back to previous areas to use your new abilities to reach places you could not get to before. If you look at the leaked video you will also be able to see clips of Asher using Gein's wings. The use of the wings looks similar to the gliding ability in the Batman Arkham games, and just like in Batman you can swoop down to take out enemies from above. Another method of exploring Nosgoth is using Gein's claws to climb. You can use the ability to climb combined with switching from the material to the spectral world to get by obstacles. The spectral world is set hundreds of years in the past, so things that are in disrepair in the material world are as good as new in the spectral world. For example, if a bridge is broken you can switch to the spectral world and cross it then switch back to the material world. For a better understanding in the leaked video you can see Asher using Gein's claws to climb out of a building, and he switches between worlds to reach the top and climb out through a roof. This mechanic is actually similar to Kratos' Amulet of Uroborus in God of War: Ascension which allows him to manipulate time by healing or decaying an object to solve puzzles or to help him climb to difficult places. As mentioned in the opening, Square Enix cancelled Legacy of Kain: Dead Sun in 2012 after it had been in development for three years. The reasons for the cancellation are unclear but there are some ideas out there. If you look at Square Enix's sales expectations for 2013, the Tomb Raider reboot, Hitman Absolution and Sleeping Dogs all failed to hit their high sales expectations. If this is any indication to how Square Enix thinks, it implies that they needed Dead Sun to sell in huge numbers but they felt that the game would not hit these numbers, therefore it was cancelled. One community manager from Square Enix said "Legacy of Kain: Dead Sun just wasn't the right game, at the right time... but you'll have to take my word on that, I'm afraid." That does not offer us any insight into why the game was cancelled but it does show that Square Enix are hesitant to talk about the cancellation. When the game was cancelled, huge environments had already been created for it and most of the motion capture and voice work had already been completed. A huge story had been written and it was already implemented into the game. When Square Enix cancelled the game, some of the developers at Climax Studios were not informed and as a result continued working on the it, even going into work on their weekends to try and complete Dead Sun. In the end, some of Dead Sun's assets were recycled and used in the multiplayer component of the game "Nosgoth." Unfortunately in May 2016 Square Enix also shut down Nosgoth's servers and every project related to Dead Sun is now lost.

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MEGA MAN UNIVERSE

Article by: Alberto Li Vigni (Yota)

Mega Man Universe is a cancelled 2.5D platformer with an emphasis on its editor to create user-made levels, this was being developed by Capcom for XBLA and PSN. It was officially announced on July 2010 with a mysterious teaser clip made by Iam8bit, a creative studio based in Los Angeles. The first gameplay video was unveiled at PAX 2010, showing three different levels and some of the playable characters, the stand outs of which were "Bad Box Art Mega Man" and Ryu from Street Fighter. Sir Arthur of Ghost n' Goblins fame was another planned guest star. Six months later, Mega Man Universe was playable at TGS 2010, where its main features were introduced in more detail. The same three stages from PAX (created only for demonstration purposes) appeared here too, each one representing a different difficulty level (Easy, Normal and Hard). However, the biggest draw was the level editor, similar to the one included in Mega Man Powered Up for PSP, where players could create new stages simply by dragging and dropping blocks, items, enemies. After it was completed, users then had the possibility of sharing their creation online for other users to download and play, much like what has now been done with the Nintendo game Mario Maker. Six characters (classic Mega Man, Universe Mega Man, "Bad Box Art Megaman", Gust Man, Chop Man and Metto Man), were available in the TGS 2010 build, each with their own special abilities (life energy, weapons energy, shoot, move and jump). Each robot could also equip items such as the "energy tank" or to choose a special weapon. Another interesting new feature was that players would have been able to make entirely new characters by combining the various body parts, to mix and match their abilities. DLC characters such as a Mega Man version of Gachapin, a popular Japanese television character, were also planned. After about half a year, Capcom officially announced in March 2011 that the game was cancelled. In a June 2011 IGN interview, Christian Svensson (senior VP of Capcom America at the time) said that the project, even if it was pretty far in production, was shelved because Capcom wasn't satisfied with its overall quality. In October 2014, Rockman Corner discovered a patent related to the game's editor, which would have permitted creators "to adjust enemy behaviour, their movement patterns and how much damage they dealt to the player". It also revealed that Capcom, in order to avoid maddening users with impossible stages, forced creators to beat their custom levels before sharing them online. As a reward for testing the stage, players received in-game currency that could be used to buy new items, arming components, etc. In 2006, Capcom had already cancelled Mega Man Mania for GBA, a collection that included the five Mega Man Game Boy titles. Mega Man Legends 3 (3DS), met the same fate in July 2011. In 2015, Capcom released Resident Evil Revelations 2 and a few remasters (Resident Evil Remake HD, Megaman Collection, Devil May Cry 4 Special Edition, and DMC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition).

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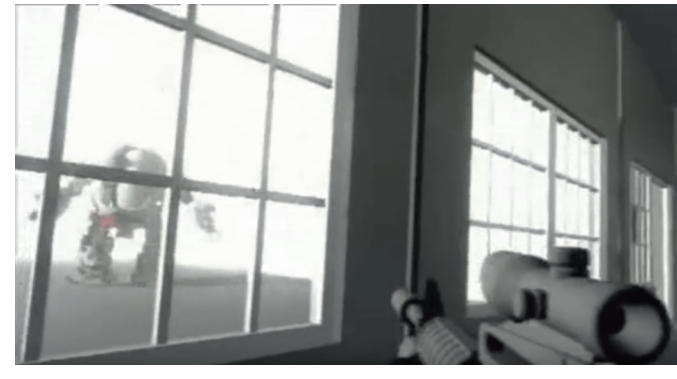
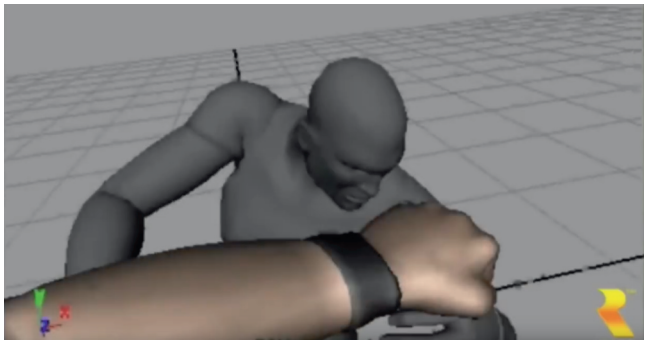
PERFECT DARK CORE

Article by: Matt Soulia



The Perfect Dark series created by Rare, is a series that seems to be plagued with misfortune. Their first release, Perfect Dark, was released in 2000 as a spiritual successor to their previous hit: Goldeneye 64. While the gameplay was good, the game suffered from the hardware limitations of the N64, creating bad slow-down in multiplayer and the main game. In 2005, after Rare was acquired by Microsoft, Rare released Perfect Dark Zero as a launch title for the Xbox 360. The game was a huge departure from the previous game, and was panned by critics and gamers alike, while also drastically underselling what Microsoft had predicted. Despite this, work on a sequel, known as Perfect Dark Core, began shortly after the release of Zero. Perfect Dark Zero was developed by what remained of the original Perfect Dark team at Rare, which was led by Chris Tilston. However, after PDZ was finished in late 2005, the team was split into smaller teams that started work on different prototypes. One of these was The Fast & the Furriest, headed by PDZ's story and script writer Dale Murchie. Another prototype team was spearheaded by Mark Edmonds and Chris Tilston, both worked on an MMO called Cascade, which was cancelled during the company restructure in early 2009. As the leads of the PD series were either bound to other (later to be cancelled) projects or had already left the company (with one being graphics director Kevin Bayliss), Rare's management decided to hand the PD franchise to the developers of Conker's Bad Fur Day; a small team (about 12 people) led by Chris Seavor. Some of the Conker team had already helped during the final stages of Perfect Dark Zero when it was ported to Xbox 360, others had worked on Urchin, a gothic / horror prototype cancelled in 2006. Planned as a direct sequel to the first Perfect Dark (as opposed to a prequel like Perfect Dark Zero), Perfect Dark Core was again going to feature many departures from the Perfect Dark formula, with the game being slated to have a "more realistic feel". As lead on the project, Chris Seavor and his team envisioned a very different approach towards the series' titular character, Joanna Dark. She was still to some extent the wise-cracking spy seen in the first game, albeit with some major changes. This Joanna was a colder, tougher warrior, whose very sanity has been, to some extent, worn down by years of field work. The storyline would have seen Joanna Dark embarking on an adventure around the world and beyond it, as she unravels another alien conspiracy. She first visits the tombs of Cairo before heading to Russia and eventually into outer space. Throughout the story, she would have been joined by a growing team of allies. These were almost all original characters named Sable, Milton, Pennington and Jo's close friend, Mia. Later in the plot, they would have been accompanied by Elvis, the Maian alien whom Joanna rescued in the original game. Chris revealed that Elvis would not have remained friendly however, he would have betrayed them as the game went on. According to Chris Seavor, the game was also going to contain a more open world as well as parkour elements



(similar to Mirror's Edge) and RPG elements (similar to Deus-Ex). The reason for this, Seavor says, was to make the game feel different from other popular modern shooters, such as Call of Duty. In late 2008, the prototype was still not greenlit. Instead, the team was cut down to only three developers, which meant the ending of the project. Most of its staff was put onto other projects - of which many were not released either. By that time, however, the prototype that started out as Perfect Dark Core was no longer set in the PD universe, it was not even referred to as Perfect Dark Core. While the gameplay was still an action FPS, the player was supposed to shoot at mechs that were controlled by humans (in case of this prototype the mech was controlled by the protagonist that was designed for an earlier built and seen in leaked gameplay footage). This was the last stage of the prototype after which it was entirely abandoned. Prototype images, animations, and gameplay video were leaked online sometime in 2009. There are many reasons for the cancellation of the game (such as the dividing up of the dev team), but according to Chris Seavor, the main reason for the cancellation was due to the poor sales of Perfect Dark Zero, as well as the popularity of Microsoft's FPS series Halo. While Perfect Dark Core never came to light, the future may yet be bright, as in 2015 Microsoft Studios creative director Ken Lobb revealed that "they have not abandoned the Perfect Dark series, and a new game will eventually be developed." The story of Perfect Dark Core is finished for now, but it still remains to be seen if that is the case in the future.

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PREY 2

Article by: Daniel Hannen

Prey 2 is a cancelled open world first-person shooter game that was being developed by Wisconsin based Human Head studios for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC. Human Head are best known for the PC and PS2 third-person action game, Rune and the long in development PC and Xbox 360 game, Prey. The game would have you play as U.S. Marshal Killian Samuels who loses his memory and becomes a bounty hunter on an alien world known as Exodus. The game would be divided into several missions in a Sci-Fi, cyberpunk open world and have the player use various gadgets and guns to hunt down aliens and complete the bounties which Killian takes on to further the story. It would be heavy on choices with the player deciding what type of gadgets to upgrade and whether to kill your bounties or spare them and hand them in. At the end of the first Prey a message is displayed saying: “Prey will continue”. The sequel was then confirmed by 3D Realms’ Scott Miller a few weeks after the first game’s release in an interview with Next-Gen magazine. When he was asked what he was working on those days he replied: “Prey 2, of course.” Miller continued on saying: “We are addressing concerns about combat, as well as adding in more gameplay innovations.” Answering to a few questions, former Prey 2 project lead Chris Rhinehart said that: “Human Head worked on an unreleased project during that time frame [2006 to 2008], but we also worked on various prototypes for a possible Prey 2 game. These prototypes focused on extending the gameplay of portals in the Prey universe, giving Tommy some abilities

beyond those in Prey 1. We also discussed ideas for possible storylines and created some concept art of new worlds. None of that was used in the Prey 2 you saw publicly announced." The game was not heard of again until March 2008 when Miller launched his new production company Radar Group. Radar Group named some of the games it would be working on, on their website. One of these games was Prey 2 which had been given a short synopsis and one piece of concept art. At this point in development the protagonist of the first game, Tommy was still the main character and the game's story was still more closely tied to the original plot. Rhinehart said: "It involved some time travel and exploring a series of worlds far from Earth. Scott Miller had always stated that he and George envisioned Tommy as a galactic savior, not just saving Earth on Earth. The original story picked up exactly where Prey 1 ended (in the post credits sequence) with Tommy jumping into a portal with Elhuit." In mid-2009, Bethesda stepped in as a new publisher, acquiring the Prey rights, and the team "almost entirely reworked" the game to fit a more Star Wars and Blade Runner aesthetic. When talking about the change of protagonist in the game, Rhinehart said: "With Bethesda, we decided to shift the game to focus on another character. Tommy was still very much part of the fiction and the sequel, but he wasn't the main character. To extend the Star Wars reference: If Prey 1 was Luke's story, Prey 2 was Boba Fett's story." This new version of the game was confirmed in March 2011 with the Swedish games magazine Games Reactor revealing the first artwork of the game. Over the next few months screenshots and previews by various gaming magazines and websites were released to the public. Excitement for the game began to build up and it reached its peak with the game's showing at E3 2011. Bethesda released a CGI cinematic trailer for the game and Human Head showed off a gameplay demo at various stage shows. After E3, a few more screenshots were released and then suddenly Bethesda and Human Head went silent on the game. Prey 2 wasn't heard of until March 2012 when rumours of its cancellation started to appear. Bethesda stated "no comment" on the matter until April 2012 saying this: "Development of Prey 2 has not been cancelled but the game will not be released in 2012 as planned. The delay is due to the fact that game development has not progressed satisfactorily this past year, and the game does not currently meet our quality standards." The future of Prey 2 was uncertain and many fans believed it to be dead with no hope for the game left in sight. The reason for the "delay" was rumoured to be due to contact negations between ZeniMax (the parent of Bethesda) and Human Head. This meant work on the game completely halted in order to work out a new deal. However this new deal eventually fell through leaving Human Head with no resources and no IP to work on. Before Bethesda axed the project, a lot was already done. Rhinehart remembers: "There was a ton of content created for different worlds, most if not all enemies implemented, a large set of weapons, gadgets, etc. A lot of missions implemented so we could play through the game and get a feel for pacing, which missions were working well, which possibly needed more work, etc. Typical balance stuff as you neared the end of a project." The public did not hear of Prey 2 again until May 2013 when rumours began to circulate that Prey 2 was now being worked on by Arkane Studios, that pitched to Zenimax "a spiritual successor to System Shock". This rumour was then confirmed in August 2013 by emails leaked by the publication Kotaku. Even more evidence appeared in May 2014 with leaked Prey 2 concept documents that showed how the project would have been much different from the original concept created by Human Head. Later that year Bethesda vice president Pete Hines confirmed that Human Head version of Prey 2 has been cancelled as "It wasn't up to our quality standard". At E3 2016, Bethesda officially shown to the world the new Prey by Arkane, but it's a completely different project from what Prey 2 was meant to be. Even with such a huge loss, Human

Head studios are still alive: they helped the development of PC third-person multiplayer shooter Minimum in 2014 and the PS4 port of Dungeon Defenders 2 for Trendy Entertainment in 2015. They still stand by the quality of their projects and really wish the public could have experienced their lost version of Prey 2.

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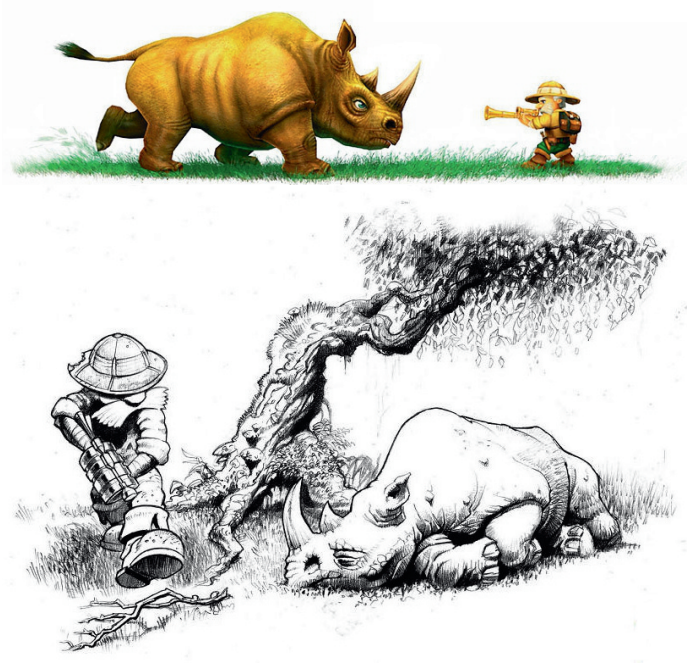
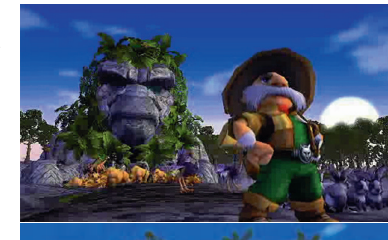
SABREMAN STAMPEDE

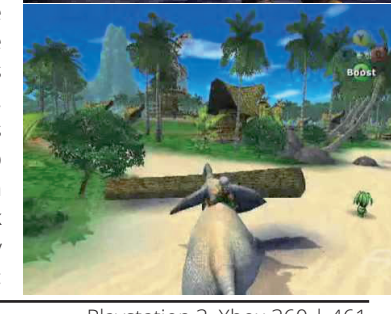


Article by: James Alan Griffiths

Sometimes, upon completion of a long and arduous project, it's not unusual to think back to the point at which you started and realise that the finished result is a million miles away, conceptually, from where you began. Sadly, Rareware's development team in charge of Sabreman Stampede - described as being 'like Grand Theft Auto with animals', an ambitious safari sandbox title with one of the company's earliest mascots in a playable role - would never be afforded the satisfaction of bringing a finished product to retail. However thanks to snippets of information posted on the internet over the years, and some fascinating beta footage discovered retrospectively in the wild, we can try to dissect its slightly baffling development history. Everyone knows that Rare was the jewel in Nintendo's crown during the esteemed days of the SNES and N64 consoles. As a second party development team, they seemed to excel at making games that - in the opinion of many gamers of that era - exceeded the quality of even Nintendo games. If Super Mario 64 created a new era of polygon-based 3D platforming games, Rare's Banjo-Kazooie looked more beautiful, was jam packed with almost infinitely more things to do and collect, and contained a gallon of humour and personality. Similarly, 1997's Diddy Kong Racing took the cartoon grand prix gameplay of the Mario Kart series and added a vibrant hub-world, adorable characters and a layer of adventure that won gamers over. Don't be fooled by the cuddly cast of anthropomorphic animals - this was by no stretch of the imagination an easy game, but if you were skilled enough to see the credits roll at the end, you'll have noticed the allusion to a sequel. It clearly stated the series was 'TO BE CONTINUED'. Sadly, no direct sequel to Diddy Kong Racing was forthcoming, contrary to this apparently telling sign. Further games in the series seemed like a no brainer due to its success critically and commercially. Fans' hope for a second game in the DKR series was rekindled briefly when, at E3 2001, during a showcase of upcoming titles due on their soon to be released GameCube system, Donkey Kong Racing was shown in some extremely interesting pre-rendered footage. The game starred Donkey Kong, Taj the genie (who debuted in Diddy Kong Racing) and other members of Nintendo's monkey family, riding atop jungle

animals, rather than in go-karts. Fans of the Donkey Kong Country series would recognise some of the animals from those game. Stampy the rhino makes an appearance as he speeds along carrying Donkey Kong on his back. Underwater and air based races were planned, involving Engarde the swordfish and Zinger the wasp, respectively. Then a seismic announcement would change gaming forever, and ultimately alter the direction of the game then known as Donkey Kong Racing. In the following year, Microsoft's controversial buyout and takeover of Rare would put an end to the exclusive Nintendo games, and that meant they were unable to use any Nintendo characters in future titles for Xbox. The Donkey Kong Racing project was dead, although over the years, Rare played a will-they-won't-they game with fans who wrote to their website to enquire about what became of the title, most notably this response from November 2003: "As for a sequel to DKR, like you said, a couple of the major characters are out of our jurisdiction these days, so rather than attempt to do a straight sequel we might as well go for something with a different licence and a bunch of different characters... oh, hang on." Sabreman (pronounced sey-ber - it means quintessentially British - just like Rare!) starred in four games when Rare was a small company known as Ultimate: Play the Game. Pre-dating their relationship with Nintendo: Sabrewulfe, Knight Lore, Underworlde and Pentagram appeared on systems like the ZX Spectrum, BBC Micro and Commodore 64, back before the home consoles we know and love. Dressed in explorer clothes and wearing a pith helmet atop his head, traversing a maze-like jungle environment was the order of the day in Sabrewulf, the first game in the series. The games were technically impressive experiences and as such regarded highly by those old enough to remember. Working with Nintendo characters, and busy creating their own intellectual property caused Sabreman to lay dormant until 2000 - quite literally. A cameo appearance in that year's Banjo-Tooie sees the player unfreezing the character from a block of ice. Symbolic! Sabreman the character now looked more like a typical explorer, with a grey handlebar moustache. This is how he would eventually be represented in Sabreman Stampede. A playable role in racing title Banjo Pilot and his a new title of his own followed, both for the Game Boy Advance. The latter, known as Sabre Wulf, combined top down gameplay similar to its predecessor and the 2D platforming of the Donkey Kong Country series. Concept art would give us an indication of how Sabreman would have ended up in Sabreman Stampede on the original Xbox. Drawings depict an upturned, crash-landed aeroplane, which potentially may have shown the games starting point or central hub area. Old nemesis Sabrewulfe is shown in early concept art, although it's later been stated that he may not have made it into later builds of the game. It's clear from beta footage unearthed by Mundorare in 2008, what direction the game would likely have taken: set in a desert island-like environment with dense jungle forests and wooden huts inhabited by an indigenous populous. Sabreman would essentially tame animals using a number of tools and weapons at his disposal. The Blunderbuzz is shown in the footage, which is essentially a gun with a rope attached. Use the onscreen crosshairs as a guide and lasso creatures such as rhinoceroses, elephants and birds that would grant Sabremen the power of flight. Once you're successful in hooking your potential jungle animal, players would enter into a mini game. Press the right buttons in the right order and that creature is tame and belongs to you. At this point you can use that animal's unique set of abilities to complete certain tasks set by the island's inhabitants. A pretty good example of this is the elephant, which we see in the beta picking up and throwing huge logs with its trunk. Although this seems like a pointless activity in the existing footage, it's not hard to see that these could be used to assist with missions involving buildings and fetch quests. Many of the gameplay elements and ideas were locked in, but as development continued, it was becoming more and more clear that the team were unable to flesh out these dynamics and tie them neatly into a game-like package. An anonymous Rare employee told Mundorare in 2008, "it was severely lacking in major features, [such as] the game's progress, story, main tasks/objectives, etc." Another thing that hampered the game's chances was the matter of timing. In 2005, Microsoft were gearing up for the launch of their second console, Xbox 360. With two Rare launch titles and an impending release date, it was an all hands on deck situation. The development muscle of the Stampede team was fully utilised to complete development for Perfect Dark Zero and Kameo:





Elements of Power in time for the Xbox 360's launch. Sadly, Sabreman Stampede would suffer as a result. Although the game was being ported from the original Xbox to the 360, it was officially cancelled in late 2005, four years since it was first shown as Donkey Kong Racing. The Rare of today is hugely different to how the company were during their days as part of the Nintendo team. The Kinect sports games Rare would go on to create were regarded by many as a waste of Rare's talents. Fears of a dark future for Rare were seemingly allayed by Microsoft at their 2015 E3 conference, where they announced ambitious looking pirate MMO Sea of Thieves. Sabreman's animal taming, desert island jungle adventure will likely never see the light of day, but the character would finally make his Xbox debut in 2015. Rare Replay collects together 30 Ultimate and Rare games for the Xbox One to commemorate Rare's 30th anniversary. As an important part of this story, the four Ultimate titles are featured. But even more interestingly, find all five jungle huts in Sabre Wulf and the player receives an achievement called Sabreman Stampede. This is a knowing nod to fans and further proof that, although the game was never finished, it still occupies a special place in Rare's heart.

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STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT 3

Article by: Andrew Borman

Following the release of Star Wars Battlefront II in 2005, Lucasarts immediately began planning a third game in their hit series. Eventually, they settled on Free Radical Design, the studio that was created by members of the Goldeneye N64 team from Rare, who went on to create the TimeSplitters series. Development of Battlefront III started for the Xbox 360, Playstation 3, PC, and Wii in 2006, with an initial release date of October 2008, although the game would never be officially announced to the public. Communication between Free Radical Design and Lucasarts became strained when FRD began to miss deadlines, causing Lucasarts to delay payments to the studio. Rumors point to delays in FRD's development of Haze, a Playstation 3 exclusive shooter, heavily impacting the development of Battlefront III, along with the fact that it was released to mediocre reviews even after all of the delays. Both Lucasarts and Free Radical Design pointed fingers at one another, blaming the other for the problems that plagued development. It was clear that the October 2008 date would be missed, with Lucasarts and Free Radical making changes to the design, so a new date of April 2009 being targeted, but that too would prove to be ultimately unobtainable. On December 18, 2008, Free Radical Design went into administration, effectively stopping all development. It was shortly after that fans got their first taste of Battlefront III, as an employee leaked a short trailer that was shown at the studio. The most tantalizing piece of footage showed that the player was able to fly from a ship on the ground of a planet through the atmosphere and directly onto a space cruiser, completely seamlessly. This feature was requested by Lucasarts, and proved to be a difficult feature to implement properly. Other than this new feature, the gameplay would have followed the same online multiplayer team versus team focused missions from previous Battlefront titles, finally taking the series to the

seventh generation of consoles. Fans were outraged that the game was cancelled, and began petitioning for Free Radical's game. On February 4, 2009, Crytek announced that it had bought Free Radical Design. While fans were hopeful that the Battlefront project would live on, they would have to wait until June 2013 before they got their first look at a new console version of Battlefront, when EA announced that DICE was developing a new Battlefront reboot for Playstation 4, Xbox One, and PC, which was released on November 17, 2015. As for the completion of Free Radical Design's Battlefront III, Steve Ellis, Free Radical co-founder, initially proclaimed that the game was 99% complete. While he later corrected his statement to "97 percent or 98 percent," in a statement to Gamespot, estimating "that we would close our 'must-fix' bugs with 3-4 weeks." Other employees were less confident. In conversations with multiple employees who wished to be to remain anonymous, the consensus was that there was anywhere from 6 to even 9 months of development left, with optimization needed to keep things running smoothly and many balancing issues left to fix. While Free Radical Design was busy on the console and PC builds of Battlefront III, Rebellion Developments was brought in to creat DS and PSP versions of Battlefront III. This version of the game was released as Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron. While the handhelds would be unable to run a straight port of the game that Free Radical Design was working on, Rebellion's job was to adapt it for the platforms. Map layouts and the story remained largely unchanged compared to Free Radical's version, following the story of two force-sensitive clones, X1 and X2, one of whom would turn to the dark side. While the seamless ground-to-space feature would not be possible on the portable hardware, a version did exist on the platforms, with transition scenes between the planet and space. Sometime in either late 2011 or early 2012, an Xbox 360 development kit from Rebellion was recovered. On it was an early build of Free Radical's Battlefront III from March 2008, given to the studio to help in the creation of Elite Squadron. In April 2012, PtoPOnline was able to obtain a copy of the build, releasing footage and screenshots of the game. The build was in rough condition, having not been intended for the public, with a framerate that dips to 1 frame-per-second at times due to the fact that it was heavily unoptimized. The HUD was an early version, with the game missing cutscenes and some entire missions. It did, however, provide insight into the development process of Battlefront III that had gone mostly unseen. Within Free Radical, an almost-entirely separate Wii team was taking the foundation of Battlefront III and turning it into a port worthy of the Wii. Team members with knowledge of the game were impressed with the Wii version, which added new missions and motion controls that even some on the main Battlefront III branch wished they could implement. While Free Radical was busy trying to finish the game, they had started on another project for Lucasarts: Star Wars Battlefront IV. Very little was done on the game, with some concept work created, including a piece that showed a "What if?" possibility that was being considered for the game: what if Obi Wan Kenobi had fallen to the dark side following his exile? Little is known about Battlefront IV, but ground-to-space would remain an important feature for the game. In fact, the developers were creating concepts that would add yet another layer of action to the game, underwater. Free Radical's Battlefront would not be the only attempt that Lucasarts made at reviving the series. Slant Six Games worked on a title called Star Wars Battlefront Online for Xbox 360 and Playstation 3, although it was cancelled when a 2010 release couldn't be met. Following this, Lucasarts themselves worked on a multiplayer focused game titled "Star Wars: First Assault" for the Xbox Live Arcade, but it was also canned when the studio was acquired by The Walt Disney Company. This was to be the first step towards a new Battlefront title, with another project, Version 2, possibly being that final step. Since Free Radical Design's buyout from Crytek, some have remained in the company, while others have gone on to other studios, while others formed their own studios. Steve Ellis currently works at the studio Crash Lab, working on titles for

mobile platforms.

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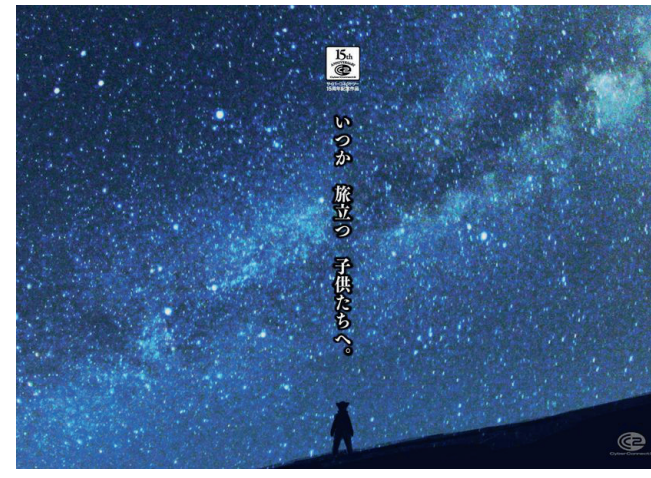
STRELKA STORIES

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Strelka Stories is a cancelled action adventure game planned for Playstation 3 that was in development by CyberConnect2 (Tokyo Studio and Fukuoka office), as a new chapter in their "Little Tail Bronx" series of anthropomorphic animal characters and fantasy floating world, composed of three main chapters: Tail Concerto (1998, Playstation), Solatorobo: Red the Hunter (2010, Nintendo DS) and Little Tail Story (2014, Android and iOS). The series is not widely known to the main public and sales were not great, but thanks to its fun gameplay, light hearted animal characters and interesting world-lore (mixing Jules Verne-steampunk style technology, mechs, magic, Laputa style floating islands and airships) it has grown a cult following of fans in the last 18 years. Strelka Stories was originally announced in July 2010 when CyberConnect2 were celebrating their 15th anniversary and opened a teaser site for this new PS3 game, showing artwork featuring their usual anthropomorphic animal characters, a 19th-century fantasy town (feeling like something out of a Studio Ghibli movie, especially if you think about Sherlock Hound) and a space-conquering theme. Over those artworks, there are a series of sentences in Japanese that can be roughly translated as ""I will surely go to space, surely", "To the children who depart someday", "The world's first man-made crystal power plant, it was built against the press-cutting international public opinion", "This country was always engulfed in restless shadows" and "The road was collapsing, they gathered Strelka, a rocket engineer...". By reading these, we can speculate that Strelka Stories could have told the story of how the world of Little Tail Bronx became a series of floating islands and the efforts of its inhabitants escaping the collapse of their planet. The title "Strelka Stories" is also inspired by the name of one of the Soviet dogs used for suborbital and orbital space flight tests in the '60s: "Belka (literally, "Squirrel" or, alternately, "Whitey") and Strelka ("Little Arrow") spent a day in space aboard Korabl-Sputnik 2 (Sputnik 5) on 19 August 1960 before safely returning to Earth. [...] Strelka went on to have six puppies with a male dog named Pushok who participated in many ground-based space experiments, but never made it into space." In November 2010, Impress Watch published an interview with CC2's president and CEO Hiroshi



Matsuyama where he shared a few more details on Strelka Stories: "Solatorobo was set in an imaginary scientific world, which targets the current generation of boys and girls. The content for this one [Strelka] will target 'Adults who were once youths'. I believe those who like Gurren Lagann and Evangelion will enjoy it. We actually didn't get approval of the project from a client or publisher. It's a title that we started because we wanted to make it." In December 2012, during a fan event for the 2nd anniversary of Solatorobo, Matsuyama said that they were still working on a new game in the Little Tail Bronx series, but he could have been talking about Little Tail Story and not Strelka Stories. The lack of a publisher for Strelka Stories is probably the reason why the game was never completed, with CyberConnect2 busy at work on other projects for which they were hired. In fact, the studio released many games for Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 (such as Asura's Wrath, .hack//Versus and the Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm series), but unfortunately it seems that Strelka Stories never found support and had to be quietly cancelled. CC2 also planned a Tail Concerto sequel in the late '90s / early '00s, but it had to wait 12 years to be finally released (as the spiritual sequel Solatorobo), so we can assume that one day we could still see the ideas conceived for Strelka Stories in a new chapter of the "Little Tail Bronx" series. CyberConnect2 is a big company today, they are currently working on the Final Fantasy VII Remake for Square-Enix and opened a new studio in Montreal (Canada). In April 2016, Famitsu magazine published another interview with Hiroshi Matsuyama, in which he teased a new game codenamed "Project Venom" or "CyberConnect Creative (CCC)" (it's not clear if the two titles are for the same game or for two different projects) a self-published digital shooter planned to be released the next year for PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC. The artwork revealed in the magazine show a fantasy setting with characters similar to the ones seen in "Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind", but no space rockets, so we can assume that this will not be directly connected to the Strelka Stories concept.

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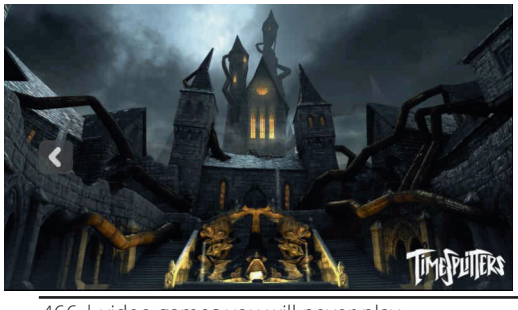
TIMESPLITTERS 4

Article by: Sebastian Zavala, Conor Hutton

TimeSplitters 4 was going to be the fourth instalment in the cult-following First Person Shooter series developed by Free Radical Design, planned for PS3 and Xbox 360. Created by former Rare employees, previous TimeSplitters titles play like spiritual sequels to the most popular Nintendo 64 shooters (007 GoldenEye and Perfect Dark), with mission based single player and a fun multiplayer mode full of weird, funny and original characters. Sadly, Free Radical filed for bankruptcy on December 2008 and came under new management, leaving only 40 of the original 185 staff members employed. The studio was bought by Crytek, the developers behind

the Crysis series, and Free Radical changed their name to Crytek UK. Unfortunately, under Crytek's name TimeSplitters 4 was never seen again. The game was originally revealed in June 2007 by the Official UK PlayStation Magazine. However, a scriptwriter from the underrated TimeSplitters: Future Perfect, Rob Yescombe, stated that the systems in development for the game were "unsigned at the moment." An early logo for the game was a parody of the Gears of War icon, with a monkey head replacing the skull. There was also some concept art for a monkey in Master Chief's armour. The developers also released some humorous pictures, for their website, of a monkey in a suit that was similar to a Big Daddy's from Bioshock. It was because of these images that people began to expect more in-game "potshots" at those games in TS4. After Free Radicals' demise, the next time we heard anything about TimeSplitters was on November of 2010. It turned out the worst had come to be: Crytek UK was actually discussing whether or not releasing a fourth TimeSplitters game was even worthwhile. Although at the same time other senior members at Crytek were talking to publishers'"over the possibilities of a new TS." On June 2011 a source, from within Crytek, leaked some new information to VideoGamer.com, which was that they were working on a next-gen game, which would utilize DirectX 11. It was heavily rumoured that the game in question was going to be a revival of TimeSplitters 4, and the 'next-gen' platforms probably would have been the PS4, Xbox One, and possibly the Wii U. During July 2011 an article, in the Official PlayStation Magazine, claimed that the fourth instalment of TimeSplitters was indeed coming: "Gun-wielding monkeys are making a comeback! A fourth TimeSplitters title is to be announced soon." September 2011 rolled around and yet another article regarding TimeSplitters appeared, this time on the review website Cinema Blend. In the article Tristan Reidford, the Lead Programmer from Future Perfect, revealed that the game was cancelled for good and gave the following reason: "Future Perfect didn't perform as well as expected in the shops. Although fun to make, without stellar sales figures a further TimeSplitters game was going to be a tough one to sell to publishers. James Cunliffe, Future Perfect's Lead Animator, also gave a reason for the game's cancellation when he said: "I think we just felt that the franchise was well-received but we had other things we wanted to try before going back to it. We weren't in any particular hurry to rush into TimeSplitters 4." During April 2012 a representative from Crytek confirmed that Timesplitters 4 was "not in development". When June 2012 came around Cevat Yerli, from Crytek, stated: "Look, I wish we were working on it. The thing with TimeSplitters is, if we made a sequel to TimeSplitters, nobody would accept this apart from some fans, and we don't know how big the fan community is unfortunately." Even if it was never officially announced,



TimeSplitters 4 was not only planned for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 but also for Nintendo's Wii. The Wii version would have been "down-sized" with many new gameplay elements, which utilized the console's unique controls. While most of Free Radical Design's staff was working on the bigger PS3 and Xbox 360 versions, only a small team was responsible for the Wii game. "I'm sure it's possible to do a control scheme that works," David Doak (one of the founders of Free Radicals) added, when asked about his thoughts on developing a first-person shooter for Wii. In late 2012 a group of fans were granted permission to create a TimeSplitters fangame using CryEngine 3. According to Michael Hubicka, the project lead, their end goal was to create a revival of TimeSplitters. It turned out that some of Free Radical Design's original team members were going to help with building this fan project. The game is going to be called "TimeSplitters Rewind" and they want to use elements from all three of the previous games. The team didn't have Crytek's permission to use CryEngine 3 from the get-go, in fact permission was only granted after 75,000 TimeSplitters fans signed a petition to make it happen. While CryEngine 3 could make the game look a lot prettier the team actually also had permission to use a lot of assets from the first three games and said they "didn't plan on fixing something that isn't broken." In other words they would try to make Rewind look and feel as similar to the first three games as they could despite the fact that they had a slick new engine. The game is still in development and the plan is to release it on PlayStation 4 and PC; Nick Button-Brown (general manager of games for Crytek) said: "TimeSplitters Rewind is a fantastic initiative that Crytek continues to support". We will never play the original Time Splitters 4 for Xbox 360, Playstation 3 and Wii, but at least TimeSplitters will not be forgotten by its hardcore fans.

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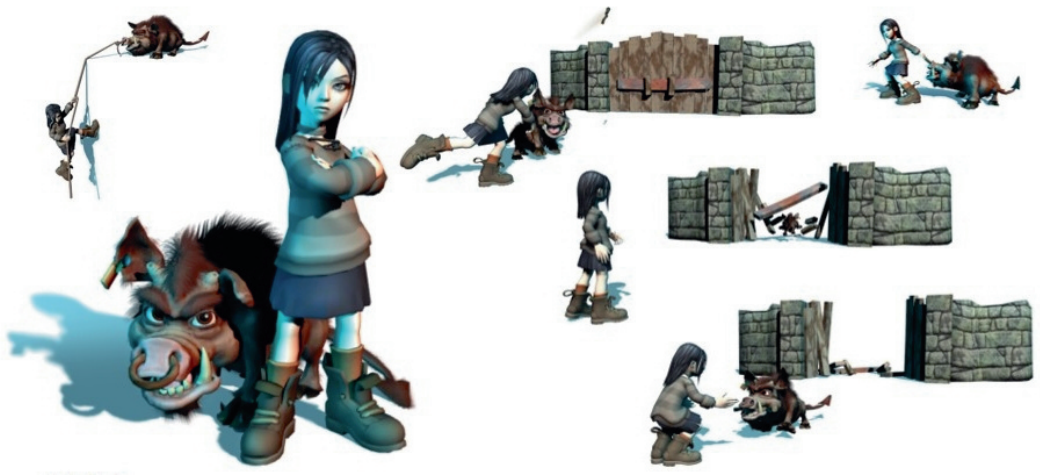
URCHIN

Article by: Luca Taborelli (monokoma)

Urchin is a cancelled "dark" adventure game that was in development in 2005 / 2006 at Rare for Xbox 360. A few pieces of concept art from this lost project were first revealed by former Rare artist Ryan Firchau at the "Nordic Game Conference", held in Malmö in Sweden in May 2008. While details are scarce, it is known that Urchin was being developed by the same team that was responsible for Conker: Live and Reloaded on the original Xbox, led by Chris Seavor, the "dad" of Conker. During this time it seems that Urchin was already in its initial concept phase as one of the multiplayer bots used in the final version of Live & Reloaded is called "Urchin Pig Girl", a name that is related to the main character of Urchin, a little girl named Lilith, and her pig / boar pet that can be seen in a concept art. During an interview with Eurogamer Chris Seavor remembers that: "We did the thing Molyneux said he was going to do with the dog in Fable. We had already done it with



the pig in that it was also the thing that was your manual, the in-game help. He would tell you stuff and say, oh, that's interesting, what's over there? And off he'd run. It worked really well." The game would have had some controversial thematic, as had already happened with the original Conker: Bad Fur Day, but Chris was able to successfully pitch the project to Rare and Microsoft: "Yeah. I wanted a change and I asked them. They said, okay, we'll get back to you. That's when I started Urchin, which was a dark fairy-tale from the point of view of a character who was the baddie rather than a good character. It was in the mould of Fable. The hook was, it wasn't about whether you were good or bad. It was about how bad you were. But it was moral in that badness is down to your point of view, which is how I managed to get it to work in terms of problems parents might have with it." After Live and Reloaded was released in June 2005, the team helped to finish Perfect Dark Zero for Xbox 360's launch in December 2005 before regrouping as the "Conker team" again and starting to work on their project for the new console. Urchin was going to be set in a dark-fantasy world, filled with monsters like werewolves and zombies, in which Lilith had to fight and solve puzzles with the help of her pig companion, complete quests for NPCs and explore mysterious environments. As wrote by Chris Seavor in an interview with Rarefanbase: "Urchin had a ton of concepts done, some design, and the whole story arc figured out... I'd planned it as 3 games, each with a cliff-hanger ending". The game used a combat system called "Dirty Fighting", as Lilith was just a little girl she had to use tricks and traps to be able to defeat enemies, for example kicking her opponents in the balls or by using different devices and the environment to make surprise attacks. An example of its "being bad" gameplay mechanics can be seen in one of the planned quests: "When you killed the princess and ripped open her guts to get her heart, which was one of the quests, on the face of it, it looked like you were quite a bad character, but in reality you'd then find out the princess was an evil vampire character who was killing local girls. That was an example quest. That's how we managed to pitch it so it was all right with all the ratings people. That would have been quite good. It was certainly different." After about 8 months of prototype work on the Xbox 360, Urchin was stopped as Microsoft was not interested in the project anymore and the "Conker team" was asked by Rare bosses Chris and Tim Stamper to work on a new, mature version of Perfect Dark. After working on another cancelled horror game known as "Ordinary Joe" and then helping with development of Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts and Kinect Sports, in 2011 Chris Stamper was fired from Rare along with many other artists after a company restructure. Chris is now working for his own indie studio "Gory Detail Limited" developing "The Unlikely Legend of Rusty Pup", a dark platformer game for Nintendo's Wii U and 3DS.

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How to help Unseen64

There are many great people from all over the world that help the Unseen64 archive by providing information, images and videos, but it's not easy to save all the beta and canceled games that are out there.

Email us: info@unseen64.net
Join the Unseen64 FB Group: facebook.com/groups/Unseen64Forum
Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/unseen64
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Here are five ways you can help support Unseen64:

1) **Share Unseen64**: Do you have a website or a blog? Spread the unseen! Add www.unseen64.net to your blogroll, write an article about lost games, make a video to help preserve your favorite canceled project, tell your friends about Unseen64, and share our website with other gamers. If more people know about Unseen64, we could receive more contributions, and our archive could grow with even more screens, videos, and information!

2) **Did you like this book?** Write a review online, in your blog, or in your favorite forum! Record a video review to talk about the book to your subscribers on Youtube, or order another copy as a gift for a friend! The earnings from selling this book will help to keep the Unseen64 archive online, to put more work into the the site, and to buy new HD and more cloud-space to save multiple backups (online and offline) of all the files.

3) **Do you know more about some of the unseen games that we already have in our website?** Help us to add more info, images, or videos! You can leave a comment on each article to give more details, point out errors, and link to new images or Youtube videos. Unseen64 is a community of gamers that want to preserve beta and canceled games, and you can be part of this community.

4) **Add a new game in the Unseen64 archive**: do you know of a beta or canceled videogame that is still missing from the Unseen64 archive? Send us an email with the description, some images, or videos and we will add it to the site! You can have your name as the author of the article or remain anonymous if you want.

5) **One-off donations and monthly support on Patreon**: Unseen64 is an independent site; We don't have enough visitors to gain earnings and no money is generated from the efforts and work we do to keep the site online. With your support, we can pay for the website's server every year. Remaining donations are set aside in a "preservation fund", which is used for emergency site expenses, to add more features and content, to make multiple backups, and for other equipment that could help the archive. All of these expenses are approved by our patrons before the money is used (unseen64.net/how-to-help-u64/donations-details). If you would like to make a single donation, we accept them through PayPal (to donate@unseen64.net), and pledges on patreon.com/unseen64
Big gaming networks such as IGN, Gamespot, Polygon, and Kotaku have the power and the money to pay a team to work full-time on their websites. We don't have their resources, but we think we have something better: a community of gamers who understands why it's important to remember beta and canceled games. Every cent is highly appreciated and sent towards the Unseen64 archive. Thank you!

Are you a developer?

It's not easy to preserve screenshots, videos, and historical details about games that were never released. Such things could be lost forever if we don't act quickly, but you can help:

Are you a game developer?
Did you work on a canceled game?

You can assist us to preserve your art and creativity - memories of your hard work on a game that will never be. We promise to save media and info in the Unseen64 archive in the most effective way possible, to let gaming history remember what could have been. Canceled games are an important piece of gaming history and we should not allow them to be forgotten. Even if everything was tossed away for economic reasons, we'd still love to see what you were able to create, and to dream about what we could have played.

Because we love videogames and we want to restore the unseen history of gaming

Developers: If you can share screenshots, videos, or information from your games that will never be, we'll be happy to preserve them in our online archive and be sure that they will not be lost.

Send us an email at info@unseen64.net and tell us about your unseen projects. We respect your privacy and you can remain anonymous if you want to.

Authors & Editors
Unseen64 Collective

This is the full list of authors, editors and contributors (in alphabetic order, by name) who in their own spare time wrote and edited the book you have in your hands. The Unseen64 collective is composed of people from all over the world, who collaborate together to preserve the unseen history of lost videogames.

Name: Alberto Li Vigni (yota) | Date of birth: 1983
Bio: I played my first videogame at six in 1989. It was Electro Freddy for CPC 464, an old European microcomputer. I wrote about videogames for the first time at seventeen, thanks to monokoma who was so desperate to let me create articles for his first website. However, i started to care about unreleased videogames only in 2004, when i did an hilariously bad english translation of monokoma's article on Ocarina of time beta, originally written in italian. Since then, i created about 200 articles for Unseen64, spending hundreds of hours researching lost games. It was a great adventure, even if not always an happy one. This book that you, our dear reader, are reading now, it's the product of over twenty-five years of love for something as apparently trivial as electronic games. Hope that you'll like it.

Name: Allan Paxton | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I am a 31 year old gamer, nerd and all round tech enthusiast. I also love to follow the games that never make it into our hands and to find out the stories behind these never to be enjoyed titles.
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Name: Andrea Ritsu | Date of Birth: July 15th 1991
Bio: When I grew up in the 90s I had a lot of hand-me down computer games from my father, and as such I took a great interest in 80s DOS and Amiga titles while everyone else were busy with their fancy 16-bit consoles. This got me into gaming and eventually game design, which also led me to wanting to learn about how games, released or unreleased, were affected by changes and hardships during the design process. My favourite game system is the Sega Dreamcast and I suppose I'm an old relic in that the Sega Fangirl in me still burn strong long after they left the console war.
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Name: Andrew Borman | Date of birth: June 4, 1988
Bio: I started Past to Present Online (PtoPOnline) in 2005. I recognized that there was more that could be done in preserving the past. My goal has become to preserve as many games as possible, in terms of finding playable builds, prototype hardware, and the development hardware to play the unreleased and beta titles. In doing so, I've managed to preserve small demos, like Bionicle 2, along with huge titles like Star Wars Battlefront III. I truly believe that all games matter. We don't want to be in a situation like old silent films or early TV shows that are completely missing, likely never to be found. That is why it is important that we do this now, rather than wait until it is too late. Games, and prototype games in particular, have a shelf life. Rewriteable ROM's really aren't meant for long term preservation, nor are writable optical media. Regardless of if we manage to save these games from the quite literal trash, there will come a time where the media is just too bit rotted to do anything about it. Looking ahead, I've been doing research into what the future of preservation may hold. Hardware, like the games that play on them, won't last forever, and providing access to games has proven to be a copyright minefield. Year over year, things seem to be improving, and I have faith that with all of our collective efforts, we might be able to preserve all games for future generations to enjoy.
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Name: Andrés Santeliz (Gamer_Fever) | Date of birth: Oct. 5 1988
Bio: Videogames are my life. I love getting involved in any story, a book, a picture or a good movie. When I play a videogame, the first thing that catches my attention is the story, more than the gameplay. I know gameplay is important. For me, a good story allows me to appreciate the videogame as a piece of art. I like playing old school, specifically, SNES, NES, GBA, Turbografx, PSone and N64. However, I also enjoy new games with intricate storylines like Half-life, Zelda, and Bioshock and so on. My favorite genres will always be "platforms" of any kind, 2D and 3D. "Puzzles" are also in my list, because I cannot stop playing Tetris once I get my hand on any portable device; I love games that make me feel intelligent. Finally, FPSs are for relaxing on weekends, let us say, killing zombies in CoD. When I look at all the games in this page, all I see is missed opportunities and money wasted in "games that weren't", a literal lost hope. This makes me feel down, especially when I see cancelled games I wanted to see alive and I was hyped for. However, because I am a frustrated developer, I find it very appealing knowing about all the processes involved in the creation of a new game, from the idea to the distribution. When I see a cancelled game, I can speculate about its failure and imagine how the game had been like, if these companies would have published them. If I were rich, I would like to bring one of these jewels back to life. Take that for granted.
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Name: Brandon Funai (SonicTailsChaos) | Date of birth: 8/24/2001
Bio: When I was about two or three years old, my dad bought the family a Nintendo 64. I grew up on the simple games like Mario Kart 64 and Hey you, Pikachu. When I was five, I got my first Gameboy Advance with games like Sonic Advance 3 and Pac-Man Collection. Fast forward to 2014, I discover a website called The Cutting Room Floor and I end up taking more interest in what was left out of games rather than what was put in. While doing research for a YouTube video on Sonic X-Treme, I came across Unseen64 and it quickly became one of my favorite sites to visit. Come 2015, I notice they want authors for their upcoming book and I quickly attempt to sign up. Now here I am!

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Name: Branislav Mikulka | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I would like to thank my amazing and beautiful wife, Eva, for supporting me in my hobbies, no matter how weird they are. Love you endlessly. I'm Full Motion Video gaming fanatic and I believe video games achieved perfection by mid 1990ties. When not gaming or writing about games I indulge myself in classic science fiction novels or in watching crappy horrors.
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Name: Brendan Hesse | Date of birth: September, 4 1990
Bio: I am a writer and author currently living in Portland, Oregon. I first become enamored with gaming when I began playing games on my father's PC when I was very young. Soon after came my first system, the Gameboy, which was followed soon after with my first home console, the Nintendo 64. Ever since those formative years, video games have played a major role in my life, even helping me discover my passion for writing. I decided to become a writer while reading my first ever issue of PC Gamer magazine at the age of 12. I immediately began writing short stories and blogging about video games in my free time, and did so throughout my teenage years. In college, I started freelancing for smaller outlets, until finally landing a job with the tech site, Digital Trends, where my professional career began. Today, I continue to contribute to Digital Trends, and freelance for numerous other gaming, music, and pop culture publications. I'm also writing a book about robots and space monsters. While gaming, writing, and music are my hobbies and passions, when I'm not partaking in those activities I am enjoying the active outdoor lifestyle that living in the Pacific Northwest provides.
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Name: Cage Arthurs | Date of birth: June 1994
Bio: An avid gamer, I mainly play games on consoles but have found myself more and more interested in PC gaming.
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Name: Carlos Nieto | Date of birth: August 27th 1991
Bio: Hello everyone! I'm Carlos, and I just love video games. Living in a pretty remote place I didn't really have friends close to my house or anything, and video games were always part of my life. The more time passed, the more I became passionate about games, learning more and more about them. It got to the point where I started to see how sometimes games were not being released, or being delayed or even changed, this led to me learning more and more about the industry, and then in the end that motivated to try and join it. Nowadays, games are still my passion, and they are a big part of who I am right now, and that doesn't look to be changing anytime soon!
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Name: Conor Hutton | Date of Birth: 17/06/1994
Bio: Hey everyone! My name is Conor, I'm an English and History student from a small town in Ireland that you've probably never heard of. I'm not certain when exactly I started gaming, but I know my first game was either The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening on my brother's Gameboy Colour or Pandemonium on the family PC. However, what I can say for certain is I didn't truly start taking gaming seriously until I got my PS3, probably in 2008, although there was plenty of Advance Wars on my Game Boy Advance SP before then. When it comes to writing about video games my articles in the book you are currently holding are from my very first writing job! While still working on the Unseen64 book I started writing for a great website called DarkZero, but was abducted by The Games Cabin after only a few months. Then on the 24th of January, 2016, The Games Cabin opened up two sister sites: Pure PlayStation and Absolute Xbox. I wrote at Pure PlayStation for around seven months before leaving to start my own website: Path of the Gamer.
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Name: Damiano Bacci (Blek) | Date of birth: 1991
Bio: I was only a shy kid interested in videogames and all sorts of stuff when I stumbled upon Unseen64. Back in 2006 I found this awesome Youtube channel with lots of interesting videos of cancelled games, suddenly I realized "Oh God, they are actually italians!". I began to collaborate with U64 at a very early age (I was only 15 years old) but what I discovered was an incredibly positive group of people that helped me shape a large part of my tastes and my personality. Unseen64 later evolved and now it keeps getting bigger and bigger, but it remains only a hobby to me, as I try to build my career in journalism. However, I'm still very attached to it as something that enabled me to connect to wonderful people and to evolve as a person and a human being. Of course there's still a lot of work that needs to be done, but I have a really good feeling about the outcome (let's continue to strive for efficiency!).
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Name: Daniel Hannen (Hannenx) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I have had a passion for video games and unreleased games since I was young. The first game I ever played was The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, a game which if I didn't play I would maybe never be as interested in the beta of games and unreleased ones. While googling Zelda when I was young I came across lots of videos of old, very different looking footage of the game that I played. I quickly went down a rabbit hole of loads of beta and unreleased games which I discovered on Unseen64. I love to play games whenever I can, I mostly play on PC these days but I still have a great love for Nintendo ever since the N64. Anything related to RPGs or Action Adventure I'll probably play but then you'll find that I won't finish it.
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Name: Evan Gowan | Date of birth: 1982
Bio: Since 2001, I have been working on my website, SNES Central. I originally started it because I wanted to try

my hand at creating a website, and I saw that there were few dedicated Super NES sites. The initial couple of years had their ups and downs, and I was almost prepared to abandon the website. As sort of a "swan song", I decided to write up a short article on the unreleased title, Fireteam Rogue. The feedback I got for that was so overwhelmingly positive, that I changed my decision to quit. Since then, my website has focused more on technical documentation, prototype games and other niche things for the SNES. Though perhaps this doesn't have the most mainstream appeal, I hope that it will be useful as a reference for the future. As the home of obscure SNES things, I have had the pleasure to be the first to investigate many incomplete and unreleased games before anyone else has. Some highlights include an early version of Rockman 7, Eurit, and of course, Fireteam Rogue. The article I am most proud of is for Star Fox 2, which I spent probably two months researching. I was able to find out so many amazing things about the game. Delving into these forgotten games has proven to be a most rewarding hobby.
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Name: Karl Gutierrez | Date of Birth : 12/17/86
Bio: born and raised in bronx new york, I was exposed to video games at a very early age. I immediately fell in love with gaming. I also became very intrigued with finding out the background stories on games. I first became interested in the beta and cancelled history of games around 1994 when the nintendo 64 was called the ultra 64. I was curious as to why the name was changed, and why the games showed were different than the ones we actually got. I remember seeing the announcements of the 64dd from japan and all the working titles for it. I also remember being very disappointed when we never got any of them. unfortunately, I didn't have the resources i do now to know that the entire project was a flop. That began my hobby of finding out what exactly happened to these cancelled games.
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Name: Felipe Pepe | Date of birth: September 08, 1987
Bio: Felipe is a Brazilian fan of old-school RPGs, and the editor of the CRPG Book Project - a free, collaborative ebook on the history of Computer Role-Playing Games.
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Name: Fernando H. P. Garcia | Date of birth: August 9, 1985
Bio: Born and raised in Brazil, my gamer life started with a Master System by the age of 5. Then I got a Super Nintendo for Christmas, and I was a Nintendo fan for the next two console generations. As my favorite video game series is Final Fantasy, I ended up buying a PlayStation 2 to be able to play the latest entries in the series, and from there on I became a console and video game collector. I grew up going to rental game shops with friends to play the consoles that we didn't own and check the videogame magazines to talk about upcoming games that we were most excited about. Those friends are still around today, but the rental stores closed down in the early 2000s. After graduating from college, I started working for international companies, thus I was able to travel more often. Between trips, I could look out for games that I used to play, whereas there were some titles that I craved to play after reading about them on magazines and they were nowhere to be found. I soon realized that many of these video games were actually never released and I wanted to know the reasons behind the cancellation of these amazing projects. That is when I found out about Unseen64 and it quickly became my source of information and nostalgia. :)
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Name: Jack Bowman aka J. Longbow (senorsuave) | Date of birth: September 1992
Bio: was always a gamer since the day I was able to move a mouse on a state of the art windows 98 computer. Played my mother's games on the NES and my brother's games on the N64 and now play on my own consoles. I'm glad I was raised on the good games of old but I'm disappointed that the newer generations will never know the struggle of getting light headed blowing on a cartridge only to put two games in at once to make it work.
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Name: Jade Avis (Angel Leonhart) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I have been a gamer for over 15 years now. Currently writing reviews/first impressions/gaming new on my blog. I also recently got my dissertation entitled Lara Croft – Pixelated Object or Feminist Gaming Icon? published on my university's online journal. I like getting involved in the National Novel Writing Month every year. I'm hoping to start up my own YouTube channel soon.
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Name: James Griffiths (Otto Spooky) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: Fast approaching the age of 31, James has been gaming since the heady days of the NES. When not losing himself in obscure JRPGs or putting in the hours at the obligatory office day job, he's either in the pub or watching stand up comedy. He adores real ale, peanut butter and the music of synthetic folk musician Momus. He currently resides in Worcester, a city south of Birmingham, the UK, in house crammed with books, records and games. His favourite soup is mulligatawny.
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Name: Jeff Wheaton | Date of Birth: May 14, 1992
Bio: I started playing videogames when I got a Game Boy Color for Christmas around the year 2000. From that moment, I was hooked; The premise of videogames had always interested me (I played some computer games from time to time), but I wasn't fascinated by them until I actually had a dedicated game system. Several years later, I would get my first home console, the Gamecube, as a birthday present. I went on to collect and research vintage games and systems, and when I started college, I gained an interest in game development. Today, I am a licensed Nintendo independent developer, I've released a commercial game for Android devices, and I am an avid gamer!
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Name: Jesse Cook | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: Hi! My name's Jesse Cook, and I'm writing to you from beyond the page! Currently, I spend my days shuffling between my home office and various classrooms at the University of Las Vegas Nevada as a graduate instructor. In the fleeting moments between grinding out term papers and slashing red across my students' papers, I find myself in front of the TV mashing buttons on my PS4. My current addictions fall within a pretty narrow spectrum, but I don't consider myself stuck in arrested development (it helps me sleep at night). As of the writing of this particular bio, I divide my time between Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain, Fallout 4, and Star Wars: Battlefront. But, even with these excellent games at my disposal, I can't help but think about the games that never made it to the 32-inch screen. Some of the most perplexing instances of cancelled games that I found in my endeavors to bring their stories to light are Faith and a .45, and Tyrannosaurus Tex. Both of these games appeared to be homeruns for the games industry and would have provided some excellent experiences for gamers. They were good men. They died with honor.
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Name: Heidi Kemps | Date of birth: Sept. 2
Bio: I'm the proprietor of gaming.moe, a site dedicated to the love of games and celebration of the weird, wonderful, and obscure things that make this hobby great. I've been researching Japanese retrogames heavily since the late 1990s, and have had the opportunity to interview many people across the globe about their involvement in the gaming industry: folks like Tetsuya Mizuguchi, Kenichi Iwao, Robert Jerauld, Hisayoshi Ogura, and many more. I also take in-depth looks at strange and interesting subjects (like M.C. Hammer's influence on gaming in the 90s) and write the occasional editorial on current affairs in gaming. And sometimes I just indulge myself and write about favorite games, or figures, or anime/manga. It's all good stuff, I assure you - lovingly edited, time-consumingly researched, and most importantly, fun and enlightening to read in a way a lot of games writing isn't! And if you dig it, there's a Patreon as well: www.patreon.com/zerochan
When I'm not updating gaming.moe, I'm usually freelancing elsewhere, giving panels at conventions across the US about kusoge, streaming on twitch.tv/devilrei or retweeting cat pictures on Twitter at @zerochan.
Online: www.gaming.moe

Name: Lee Garbutt | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I'm a writer and video producer that has previously contributed articles and video content to press outlets such as GodisaGeek, VICE and Nintendo Life. Videogames have always been one of my passions, and that's not just limited to the games themselves - Much like any form of media, the story behind the making of a title can be just as interesting as the finished product. I remember reading games magazines with massive cover stories like Starfox 2, and then wondering why games as exciting as this, never made it to market. Official sources rarely reveal the whole story of a game's development, which is why online resources such as Unseen 64 have an important role in making sure these stories are told and archived, ensuring that this information is widely available for everybody. For that reason, I wanted to help out with this project in any way I could. When not creating content for others, I run my own YouTube channel - Pug Hoof Gaming. This channel covers a wide range of gaming topics, from retro classics to modern hits; with the goal of presenting the positive side of gaming as a medium and as an industry. The gaming community as a whole can be a negative and sometimes toxic space, and PugHoofGaming is a place for like-minded fans to celebrate gaming in all its forms.
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Name: Liam Robertson (Tamaki) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: The lost and unseen realm of gaming has long been a fascination of mine. I remember growing up, reading about all the cancelled N64 and Gamecube games in magazines. Years later, I investigate those which most piqued my curiosity as a kid, talking to their developers and releasing my findings in a YouTube documentary series bearing Unseen64's name.
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Name: Lindsay Schubert (infamousRedYoshi) | Date of birth: 5/21/1995
Bio: I had become invested in the world of gaming when I was a child. I was introduced to Nintendo games before anything else. I had gotten into SNES games and would always play on the Super Mario All Stars cartridge with my brothers and their friends. Ever since then, video games and especially, Nintendo's consoles and games have had a big influence on me. My favorite two consoles thus far are definitely the Nintendo GameCube and The Nintendo 64. Whenever I'd have some free time when I was younger, I'd play these consoles. At this point in time, they mean a lot to me. To add on, the concept of gaming is very unique and I always enjoy trying to understand it to the best of my ability. This is the reason why I love writing, researching and most importantly, playing these games. Released games are not the only ones to consider when looking at the gaming world, the cancelled ones are important too. Beta versions also help understanding the art and thoughts of the creators behind them. It is my mission to do my best in learning about all that world has to offer, including getting to know the community I am involved in.
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Name: Luca Taborelli (monokoma) | Date of birth: April 1983
Bio: I was born in Italy in 1983, the same year in which the legendary videogame crash reset the gaming industry in North America and probably cancelled hundreds, thousand of games. What an interesting time. Many years later, i was waiting for Nintendo 64 games that were never coming out. Yep, my most wanted N64 games kept to be postponed or cancelled, so i spent a lot of time looking at screenshots of unreleased stuff in gaming magazines. Then came the internet and after collecting a LOT of screenshots from beta and cancelled games, i decided to organize them all in a website: that's how Unseen64 was born, around 2001. More than 15

years later, today Unseen64 is a project too big for myself only, but luckily there are many gamers from all around the world that help and support this collective project. I'm currently living with my girlfriend near Lake of Como (still in Italy), trying to live doing what i love the most: playing videogames, listening to spastic music, reading interesting books and manga, watching weird movies, scratching my hands while skateboarding, cultivating our home garden, helping people with their websites, drawing comics no one will ever read, researching about less known topics i like and sharing what i found with the world. With efforts, patience and downshifting I'm trying to find my way to live free from a traditional job, to spend my (short) time in this world following what really makes me happy. As wrote by Guy Debord in 1953 on a wall on the Rue de Seine: "Ne Travaillez Jamais".
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Name: Matt Redmond | Date of Birth: February 23, 1995
Bio: I been a gamer since I could properly hold a controller and use a keyboard. I always wanted to be involved in video games, not just being a gamer. In high school, I decided to write for the website Unseen64, and I've met some amazing people while doing so.
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Name: Matthew Soulia (VitoKing) | Date of birth: April 1989
Bio: Hello readers! I am a 26 year old gamer and writer from New York. In my downtime, I enjoy getting shot in the face by my beautiful wife Sonja (in Perfect Dark of course). I am very happy to have been a part of this book, as writing has helped me cope with a devastating loss... the cancellation of Mega Man Legends 3!

Name: Nicolas Dunai (Oakland, Kao) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: Like many other people, I've been playing videogames for most of my life. Even without owning every console, I don't think I've ever felt an allegiance to one set company, games do the speaking and just about every console has a collection of great games. Being a fan of games, I would buy a lot of magazines. The one that really birthed my interest in games that I wouldn't be able to play (as an American or otherwise) was GameFan. GameFan in particular featured a good number of games exclusive to Japan, which I wouldn't play until I became an adult with disposable income. As a child though, the idea of these games fascinated me. This fascination would grow larger when I discovered Unseen64 around a decade ago. I was introduced to the world of prototypes, unreleased games, how a game could have four revisions, and spawn two separate games from it's development. I've had a large interest in this since.
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Name: Pixel Sim | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I like more or less every genre of game from as far back as the Atari 2600 to the PS4/XBONE. However, if pushed to find a favourite, I would have to go with the Elder scrolls series: Morrowind through to Skyrim closely followed by the more recent fallout games. I am particularly fond of the Bloodmoon expansion for Morrowind because of the difficulty and the nice, snowy environment :p
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Name: Roberto Tuñón (kungfuweapon) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: Born in the eighties, life has taken me to different countries but passion for videogames has been a constant. My first memories playing the original 1986 OutRun arcade and barely reaching the cabinet pedals are still fresh on my mind. After some time and many quarters spent, I managed to get an Atari ST computer with a bunch of diskettes containing classics such as Gauntlet, Afterburner, Double Dragon... and yes, OutRun! Finally! Most of those were terrible ports that bore little resemblance to the originals but that did not stop me from truly enjoying them. Consoles and particularly the NES were all the rage in my childhood and pretty much all the kids in school had one. Super Mario, Ninja Turtles, Zelda... At this point I would also discover another of my passions: learning languages. Games were getting more complex and some demanded a basic understanding of English; teachers were delighted that I showed so much enthusiasm but probably got kind of annoyed at my constant requests for translations! In my internetless adolescence, VHS tapes included with gaming magazines were the only way to get footage of upcoming hits and it was then that I developed curiosity for unreleased titles. I remember watching beta videos of Banjo-Kazooie or specifically of Conker 64. When Rare ditched Conker's childish look in favour of the politically incorrect Bad Fur Day it was such a shock! Although I really liked the final game, I wish I could have played the prototype too. Many consoles and computers later and certainly with much less free time, I still check out some of the latest releases while occasionally revisiting - or discovering - the classics. It is very satisfying to combine the old and the new and hope to continue enjoying this hobby for many years!
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Name: Mr Ross Sillifant | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: An avid, aging gamer, been heavily into videogames since the very earlier arcades, bitten by the bug and thus began a long history in gaming.Convinced my parents to buy him a Sinclair ZX81 as it'd help with his homework :-) and thus followed an Atari 2600, then 800XL, Commodore C64, Atari 520STFM, Sega Game Gear with MS convertor, Megadrive, Mega CD, back in with Atari for the Jaguar, then switched to Sony for the Playstation,...PS2, PS3, PSP and now PS4. Also owned likes of original Xbox, Xbox 360, SNES, Neo Geo Pocket Colour, Nokia N-Gauge, various Tomy Tronic 3D handhelds, numerous Nintendo/Grandstand LCD games (wish i'd still kept them)..Nintendo:GB (hated) GBA, GB Micro, Game Cube with GB Player, Atari Lynx MK 1 and MK2, Vectrex, Sega Saturn, Atari 600XL, Cannoo handheld and Commodore A1200 (think that's my lot), so NO personal bias to any system, if it has games i want, i'm there. I've been lucky enough to assume the 'role' as 'researcher' for likes of Unseen64/GTW/Classic Console Mag/Pro-Atari/Return magazine/Atari Gamer Magazine, St Gamer Magazine/Core Design website/Grumpy Old Gamers/Atari I.O etc etc, but i must stress i do NOT:consider myself an expert, historian,authority on anything, nor a media personality on any subject matter, nor do i work for any form of payment, i just feel proud to of been part of so many rich communities and been

able to uncover truth where possible behind so many false claims made by the media and those that work within it and thus bring answers to what became of....where ever possible and i'm truly grateful to those that have hosted my finds and appreciated the time involved.
Online: have no website of my own etc, reason being i firmly believe in researching for community / others projects, rather than self promotion.

Name: Ryan DePalma | Date of Birth: 12/31/1995
Bio: I'm an average gamer, stuck in college, studying to (hopefully) become an editor for major gaming publications. Both writing and gaming have been my passions for as long as I can remember. I started out playing Pokémon Snap on the N64 when I was younger, moving onto FPS's and RPG's in my 'older' years. However, nothing will ever compete with the amount of time I've sunk into the greatest series of all time: Monster Hunter! Seriously, all of those games are amazing. It's like Shadow of the Colossus had a baby with Dark Souls. Every fight is a boss fight with awesome weapons, so go pick up whatever the newest iteration is and give it a shot! I'm also a sucker for the Halo series, but let's be real, it went downhill after Halo Reach. When it comes to unreleased games, I probably know less than you. In fact, I hardly knew about any of these games before I started working with Unseen64. But after editing a bunch of articles, I can safely say that there are many treasures that will sadly never see the light of day.
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Name: Ryan Hamann | Date of birth: January 10, 1990
Bio: I am a doctoral student studying and practicing clinical psychology in Seattle. I write video game articles and reviews for various websites and am a member of the Cane and Rinse and Sound of Play podcast teams.
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Name: Sam Batten (LazyFace) | Date of birth: N/A
Bio: I have always loved games but was never allowed a console, I would always have to go to friends house to play games and this only made my love for them grow as they were something I couldn't always play. I was finally bought a PS1 when it was released and I have never looked back. Everything about gaming from the development to the release I love to read and write about and it is my hobby and passion. I have been writing for the Unseen64 website and the thrill of uncovering details that were previously unknown about unreleased titles is a the best feeling. I also write about the importance of preserving games and why it is something that everyone who loves games should care about, and have had an article published in Custom PC magazine on the subject. It is a pleasure working with the team at Unseen64 and the hard work and dedication put in by them all is astounding, and I hope you enjoy this book as much as we have writing it.
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Name: Sam Minnich | Date of birth: 1997
Bio: I was born and raised in Northeast Ohio in the United States. My earliest experiences with video games was when I was three, playing sega Genesis, Super Nintendo, and pc games; as well as whatever my cousins let me play along with them. My first personal video game console was given to me for my 7th birthday, a Nintendo 64; a system I would spend countless Saturday mornings playing super Mario 64, Mario Kart, banjo kazooie, and super smash bros. I never really beat a game growing up, I just played them till I got frustrated and then play something else. The first time I got to the end of a game was technically smash brothers; I got to the final stage in the single player mode, unfortunately my 7 year old mind was not prepared for it, as soon as I saw master hand eerily floating down and manically laughing at me it terrified me and I shut the system off never to touch that game for a few weeks. But I did fully beat a game eventually (albeit about nine years later). Growing up I never really had my heart set on a profession. But in my freshmen year of high school I discovered I could write, well type (my handwriting is terrible). Around 2012 I had begun to get into retro games, buying a Super Nintendo, and PlayStation over that summer. I also began visiting websites like Didyouknowgaming.com, as well as Unseen64 to learn facts on games. I was intrigued by games that would or could have been, it was mysterious to me. I loved hearing about removed content of a game, and unused content of a game that was hidden in the code of the game. Getting to write for this book is such an honor and I am proud to be one of the many great writers who contributed.
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Name: Sebastian Zavala Kahn | Date of birth: September 5th, 1990
Bio: I'm twenty-five years old, I live in Lima, Peru and, although I'm a filmmaker at heart - I currently work both as an Assistant Director at a local production company, and as a film critic - , video games have been a passion of mine since I was six or seven years old. After all, I also write for Peruvian gaming sites such as MasGamers.com, Nintendo.pe, and FansdeZelda.pe. The first console I ever owned was a Nintendo 64, and I've been a passionate Nintendo fan for years (evidence of which you'll be able to see in my lists of favorite games, both released and cancelled), but I currently play games on a variety of consoles, from the classic Sega machines (I love the Dreamcast) to current consoles such as the Wii U and Sony's PlayStation 4. The Legend of Zelda is my favorite franchise, I enjoy playing any version of Super Smash Bros. with my friends from time to time, and I've always been interested in the process of making games - from the inception of an idea, to level and character design, to the final product. Cancelled games have always intrigued me - maybe because of the possibility of what could have been, or maybe simply because many of those titles had such potential, looked so incredibly cool. From the N64's Mother 3 to the Wii's Project HAMMER, most of these games had the potential of being really interesting, really fun and visually arresting products, but for one reason or another, they never saw the light of day. Why did we write this book? Because all of us - all the authors of this great project - are incredibly curious, because we want to know what happened to these games, why they were cancelled, why such potentially good ideas were rejected or simply vanished into thin air. And we also want you, the reader, to know more about these phantom games. With any luck, all of us will be able to learn a little bit more about gaming history, about games that have almost disappeared from public consciousness and that, despite their ultimate fate, deserve a little bit more of love.

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Name: Silvio Carréra | Date of birth: 06/20/1990
Bio: The first game I ever remember playing was Warcraft II for the PC with help from my older brother. Back then I had no idea that games would pull me in so hard as they did. With the following years my passion and interest for the medium grew and early on I remember saying that this is what I wanted to do with my life: make great games. I wanted to able to work on something that would bring the same joy to other people. To create worlds where they could wander, be curious and be amazed. Five years ago when I turned 20 I decided that this was it. This was the time to stop wondering and start doing. Though I still haven't got quite where I want to be yet, these past five years have been truly amazing. I was able to work on many games, learn and make amazing friends along the way. I have recently released my first commercial game called Ladra, which I was, humbly, fortunate enough to get to Steam. A dream come true way beyond my expectation when I started developing it. But I don't want to stop there. I want to continue on this path. I want to continue working on better games and have more people play it. The goal remains the same as it did when I was thirteen years old: make great games.
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Name: Tim Carbone | Date of birth: May 12th
Bio: My name is Tim, and I have been playing games my entire life. I am a senior in high school, and next year I am going to college to major in game design with a minor in computer science. I write a blog about video games where I review them, as well pick them apart in case studies and story analyses.
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Name: Tony Peters | Date of birth: 1982
Bio: My name is Tony Peters, and I am a games journalist, creative writer, lifelong gamer and occasional game tester. I have written about various different genres and platforms over the years, as well as being lucky enough to be allowed behind the development curtains. My goal is to one day write and develop the first big budget, M-rated comedy role-playing game that fully harnesses the creative talent of the best comedians our world has to offer.
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Name: Tristan Avery | Date of birth: January 4th 1990
Bio: NJ based freelance writer and lifelong video game, comic, and movie fan. Please don't make fun of me for having an AOL account as my primary email.
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Name: Tyler Lee | Date of birth: 07/23/94
Bio: I've been an avid gamer for most of my life and it all started with the original Game Boy. My friend had just gotten a Game Boy and they allowed me to play Super Mario Land. I was instantly hooked on video games the moment I started playing. Almost 16 years later and my collection of played video games is growing larger.
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These other people also helped with the book, but we did not receive their profiles in time to be published: Connor Sheehy, Daniel Fox, Philip Dempsey, Thomas Connell, Will Pridmore. Additional book layout design support by Marika Contu.

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YOU, who have bought this book: please let us know what you think about it! Your feedback is always important for us, send us an email to info@unseen64.net or tweet at @unseen64

How many video games have you played during your life? Do you think games are a form of art that should be preserved? What if we told you that there are thousands of interesting games you'll never play, all of which could be lost forever? It's true, there are many cancelled titles that are often lost to video game history. While video games may not be largely considered to be on par with paintings and statues, they are still art on their own, just like books, movies, and music, and like other works of art, video games have their own lost works. Games that were cancelled, never released, and often not even known by the general public. Unfortunately, there is no proper museum dedicated on saving them.

Over the course of almost 500 pages, the 45+ writers and editors of this crowdsourced book hope to educate the gaming world on the history of video games as an ephemeral art form, by showcasing more than 200 lost games that could have been forgotten. Starting from early '90s PC titles, to 8-bit games for the NES and Sega Master System, and all the way through to the 7th generation of consoles with Playstation 3, Xbox 360 and Wii, there are many unseen games that you will discover in this book. Also included are essays about the preservation of cancelled games, how to research for these unseen titles, and 20 interviews with museums and developers who worked on lost games. In this book there's plenty of examples of what gaming history is losing every day.

Hopefully, by reading this book, more gamers, developers, youtubers, gaming journalists and historians can look back at what could have been and as a result raise awareness on the preservation of lost games: to see the hidden stories that played a part in leading gaming culture to where it is now.

Color book cover sprites by Luca Taborelli | koma.gnoseologico.net